Parents' Perceptions of School Effectiveness:

An investigation into parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of Tasmanian public schools.

by

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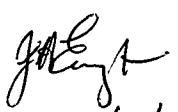
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma by any educational institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously written or published, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

John H. Ewington



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Abstract

In 1992, Tasmanian schools were using forms of school self management based on school effectiveness literature. An accountability vacuum from the client's perspective had been predicted. There was an increasing need for school managers and policy makers to become more responsive to parents.

One aim of the project reported here was to set up processes to obtain feedback from parents which would allow school managers and policy makers to pick up 'weak signals' coming from their parent body. Another aim was to use the same processes to determine the perception that parents have of the effectiveness of Tasmanian public schools. Two research questions were selected. What are the perceptions that Tasmanian parents have of the effectiveness of public schools in Tasmania? What are the differences in perceptions between various groups within the Tasmanian parent community?

Political support for the project was obtained after representation was made to the Department of Education and the Arts (DEA), State Schools Parents and Friends Association and 'Melville Swamp' school principals, councils, parents and friends association and teachers. These discussions helped develop categories concerning effectiveness and led iteratively to the joint development of an instrument. The questionnaire gathered both preferences and perceptions of the actual situation using items related to the content categories; sense of mission, school community relationships,

high expectations, safe and orderly environment, educational leadership and student progress. Responses to open questions were used to interpret patterns.

A qualitative and quantitative approach was used to develop the instrument. Trialing and refining the survey instrument continued with the Melville Swamp school parents, councillors, principals and teachers until it had acceptable levels of reliability and validity. A stratified random sample of parents in Tasmanian public schools was then surveyed. Schools were divided into groups according to type, size and educational needs index from which random selections were made. Approximately fifteen hundred parents from twenty eight schools were invited to respond to the survey. Good response rates, averaging 60%, were obtained.

This exercise demonstrated that parents' view on school effectiveness can be both categorised and measured. The were significant differences between groups of parents. Eigen values combined with an analysis of optional comments suggest that parents make an overall judgement of 'goodness' or 'badness' largely based on the quality of the relationship between their children and their children's teachers. Other judgements are made within this global assessment.

A conceptual framework relating the content categories used in this study was developed. Other linkages were hypothesised to further the development of a school effectiveness conceptual framework.

High school parents have stronger preferences about matters related to achievement, progress and expectations while primary school parents have stronger preferences with regard to the use of volunteers within the school. Perceptions of the actual situation in schools varied greatly. Primary school parents' responses were significantly more favourable than either high school or district high school parent responses. District high schools were perceived by parents as the least effective of the three types of school. Urban parents perceive schools to be significantly more effective than do parents of rural schools. This finding was traced to the larger number of less experienced and more mobile teachers found in rural schools.

This study suggested a number of practical recommendations. Teachers should be provided with the opportunity to explore the implications of the core principles of school effectiveness. School leaders should evaluate parents' perceptions of school effectiveness along with other forms of accountability data and to look for new policy touchstone. Flexible industrial arrangements should be negotiated for school professionals so that a variety of communication strategies can be implemented that take account of the changing nature of work and family. The DEA should look for alternative methods of staffing rural schools. Parents should be encouraged to make formal and informal school visits.

Recommendations concerning the theory of school effectiveness and further research centred on four issues: parents' perceptions of school effectiveness and student outcomes; parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of primary and secondary sections of district high schools; organisational arrangements of schools and parents' perceptions of school effectiveness; accountability procedures from the client's perspective.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

> *The closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement (Fullan 1991, p. 227).*

This chapter introduces the problem, explains the context, clarifies the research approach and summarises the layout of the thesis. Parent-school interactions are discussed before terms used in this study are defined. Barriers to parent involvement are then detailed. Some introductory comments about the terms devolution, school effectiveness and the self managing school are made. The research methodology and limitations are then outlined, the chapter concluding with a description of the layout of the thesis.

1.1 Statement of Problem

This study reviews the belief that the greater the interaction between teachers, school leaders and policy makers and parents/guardians/care givers of students, then the greater the impact of schooling on student development. Evidence from the literature tends to support this belief while identifying a paradox.

On the one hand, most teachers say they want more contact with parents but feel that many parents are unavailable or uninterested. On the other hand, most parents say they want to find out more about what their children are supposed to learn and what they can do to help, although they need specific direction and support to carry out this role (Fullan 1991, p.236 ; Urich and La Vorgua 1980, p34: Christenson and Cleary 1990, p.5). This

paradox has stimulated a great deal of literature now introduced.

Lindle and Boyd (1989) used balance theory to propose a symbiotic relationship between parents and schools. They argued that teachers used professional knowledge and expertise, which most parents did not have, while parents provided essentials such as food, clothing and provision for rest, without which teachers could not perform their work. They concluded that professionals deal with particular aspects of children's education while the parents and community provide and deal with other activities.

Epstein (1987) argued that the type of communication between experts and non-experts may determine whether the relationship is symbiotic or competitive. She suggested that school leaders should seek to achieve shared understanding between parents and schools via communication that emphasised cooperation and information sharing. Linking mechanisms needed to be set up in an attempt to achieve this shared understanding (Beare *et al.* 1989; Davies 1989). Allowing parents to have a say in an anonymous way may start the linking process for many parents who feel threatened by or who cannot attend school activities in whatever form. Professional skills of teachers have also been found more useful and powerful when operating in frameworks which were derived from collaborative processes (Lindle and Boyd 1989; Brandt 1989).

Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989 p. 246) suggested that school staff and policy makers should have the machinery set up to obtain formal feedback from the school's community, including parents, employers, students, teachers and the wider community. They proposed that it should include carefully worked-out indicators of unrest so that 'weak signals' would be picked up from the community. How effectively school managers and policy makers reacted to these signals may have been a contributing factor in the overall effectiveness of the school by bridging the gap between parents and school

teachers/leaders/policy makers. This key issue is examined in more detail in section 2.8.

Johnson (1987) was more specific, suggesting that school leaders needed to test their perceptions against those of colleagues, students, administration and stakeholders with whom they are associated. This required frank non-judgemental communication that allowed for the stakeholders to express contrary points of view. Shaver (1981, p. 83) argued, that, despite conceptual difficulties, there was broad consensus that perception was the understanding of the world people construct from data obtained through their senses. Hence, Johnson (1987, p. 209) recommended that school leaders and policy makers should address the following questions:

> To what extent do parent perceptions affect behaviour in school?
>
> Are parents able to consciously identify and express their perceptions?
>
> How accurately do the perceptions portray reality?
>
> Are perceptions shaped by identifiable and commonly occurring factors?

There is, nevertheless, potential danger in trying to measure people's impressions about abstract organisations such as schools. Cameron and Whetten (1983, p.12) concluded from organisational effectiveness research that:

> There appears to be ample empirical evidence ... to suggest that individuals frequently cannot report accurately the criteria of organisational effectiveness that they implicitly hold. Nor are they aware of the factors that motivate their judgments or evaluations of an organisation. When researchers ask various constituency members to specify important criteria of effectiveness, there is no assurance that the criteria they enumerate will be consistent with the criteria they use

implicitly to judge effectiveness.

Johnson (1987, p. 213) refered to this as the 'halo effect'; 'a tendency to form global impressions based on overall judgements of 'goodness or badness'.

There was, however, a greater danger in having little or unreliable information. School leaders needed to find out what people were thinking or else decisions could be made in a form of ignorance laden risk. This brings us to the project reported in this thesis.

The project had, as one of its aims, to set up 'machinery' to obtain formal feedback from parents in an effort to help answer some of the above questions. This aim was adopted while noting that other interest groups were important but their views were deemed to be beyond the scope of this study.

The project began with ambiguous indicators of participation trends. Marsh (1988, p. 109) found that there was a trend for parents, both individually and collectively, to become active in Australian schools. Teachers were regarded as 'experts' by parents, who largely accepted what happened in schools. Other evidence showed that, with improving levels of community education, changing perceptions of human-service organisations, the increasing importance of qualifications in obtaining employment, and legislative changes, had radically altered community involvement in school (Louden and Brown 1993, p. 131). Macpherson (1995, p.1), however, suggested that parental desire to participate in governance had been largely satiated. Whatever the cause, it was likely that parent involvement would remain at higher levels than in the past in Australian schools.

The issue of benefits was also unclear. There was increasing evidence found to suggest that increased involvement in schools by parents was beneficial, yet that some of the

means of involvement may have been discriminatory (Christenson and Cleary 1990, p.4: Lindle & Boyd 1989, p.323). Even when goodwill existed there was insufficient awareness that, for many parents, school was alien territory. Despite this it was generally conceded that parents had opinions and that a means of obtaining them was required.

There existed considerable recent research into what parents thought 'ought' to happen in schools but there was very little research reported on what 'is' happening in Australian schools. This was particularly true of Tasmania (Williams, 1992). The evidence suggested that parent participation varied from school to school of the same type and between different forms of schools. Epstein (Brandt 1989, p. 27) believed, however, that as few as two to three percent of parents had severe problems that prevented participation and that only twenty percent of parents were involved regularly. This was taken to imply that the other seventy five percent would have liked to become involved in some form another and that it was up to school leaders to improve the level of understanding and participation rate.

In summary, there was increased interest in parent participation in governance during the late 1980's and early 1990's, although this was just one form of parent participation, as the types of involvement reviewed in the next section indicate.

1.2 Types of Parent Involvement in Schools

The term 'parent' refers to a father, a mother, a legal guardian and/or caregiver (Macquarie Dictionary 1989). Parent involvement in schools has been grouped into five categories; basic needs, communication from school to parent, home assistance, volunteers and governance/advocacy (Epstein and Dauber 1988: Staples and Morris 1993: Fullan 1991:

Marsh 1988). These categories are defined in Table 1.1 below. Extrapolating from Fullan (1991) and Epstein (Brandt 1989), the number of parents involved in each category decreases from a high 95 to 100% for basic needs to probably only 3 to 5% for governance/advocacy.

Table 1.1
Types of Parent Involvement in Schools

Basic Needs	Parents have the responsibility to ensure children's health and safety; to employ the parenting and child-rearing skills needed to prepare children for school; to supervise discipline, and guide children at each age level; and build positive home conditions that support school learning and behaviour appropriate for each age level. Without this involvement it would be very difficult for schools to operate.
Communication from the School to Parents	The basic obligations of schools include to initiate the communications from school to home about school programs and children's progress. Schools vary the form and frequency of communications, such as memos, notices, report cards, and conferences, and greatly effect whether the information about school programs and children's progress can be understood by all parents.
Home Assistance	Parental involvement in learning activities at the home refers to parent-initiated activities or child-initiated requests for help, and ideas or instructions from teachers for parents to monitor or assist their own children at home on learning activities that are coordinated with the children's classwork. It includes supervising homework, acting as tutor and/or mentor.
Volunteers	Volunteers refers to parents who assist teachers, administrators and children in classrooms or in other areas of the school but not necessarily involved with their own children. It also refers to parents who come to school to support student performances, sports, or other events, or to attend workshops or other programs for their own education or training. It may also include working bees, fundraising activities (fetes, street stalls, raffles), canteen helpers and book covering.
Governance/ Advocacy	Parent involvement in governance and advocacy refers to parents taking decision-making roles in the parents and friends, advisory councils, or other committees or groups at the school, district, or state level. It may also refers to parent and community activists in independent advocacy groups that monitor the schools and work for school improvement.

According to Fullan (1991), basic needs, school communication and home assistance could be regarded as instructional related involvement. Volunteers and

governance/advocacy were considered as non-instructional related involvement. Student outcomes were deemed to be more directly related to instructional related involvement with only a very weak link between student outcomes and non-instructional related involvement.

1.3 Barriers to Involvement

The nature of the Australian community has changed rapidly over the past decades (Hughes 1991, p. 55). Schools are not culturally neutral places (Angus 1993, p. 40: Angus 1994, p. 66). Trying to impose a system designed for people of middle class Anglo-Saxon descent with a Christian religion may, on the one hand, open up horizons for some, while widening the gulf for others who are unable to assimilate the dominant culture or who insist on their right to their own ethnicity and values. Cultural values are learned at home initially and students continue to use them as the cultural reference point, which infers that socially just schools can not exist without parental participation (Staples and Morris 1993, p. 5). Some of the changes that have characterised Australian society over the past twenty years are (DEA 1991a p.19: DEA 1991b p. 2):

> the increasing numbers of mothers in the paid workforce;
> the increasing numbers of lone parents;
> the increasing impact of technological change including an explosion of information technology ;
> the prominence of environmental, social and health issues;
> varied, and sometimes inconstant, family structures;
> new child-minding and child-rearing practices;
> increasing cultural, religious and value diversity;
> increased locational mobility;

changed patterns of employment and unemployment; and

economic instability, bringing poverty and sudden changes in lifestyle.

The basic patterns to participation were also well indicated. Class and income were major factors in determining which citizens participate in school activities (Davies 1979, p. 53), in particular governance/advocacy. Members of families who were involved in business or professions or who were public servants of middle income are most likely to be involved with school activities (Loke 1994, p.176).

Participators in school decision making tended to have the skill and confidence to take part in these activities, took part in these activities elsewhere, usually supervised others in technical/professional/managerial jobs, had affiliations with other participators, often as friends, and had more friends in the neighbourhood than non-participators (Loke 1994, p. 176). Epstein and Dauber (1988, p.5) referred to the 'hard to reach parents' as working parents, parents of older children, less educated parents, parents new to the school and other adults with whom children live. Many parents worked full time and couldn't visit their child's school building during school hours.

Lower socioeconomic groups tended not to be well represented and often felt alienated from school because of their own experiences, frequent locational moves and their ability to form affiliations for support. This division between socioeconomic groups was even greater when considering school governance (Loke 1994: Epstein 1989). More broadly, the nature of modern, mobile and pluralistic society lacks a symbolic essence of closeness necessary to form the affiliations required (Pettit 1980).

There was a good deal of research encountered that showed that school leaders and teachers generally controlled access to the school. In schools where teachers were not, or

felt that they were not involved in decision making processes, and there wasn't an openness to outside input, parent/guardians felt a sense of hostility even if they did come into the school grounds. They felt inadequate when facing the 'experts' (Loke 1994, p. 179). It is also fair to note that education authorities often determine the guidelines for parent/guardian involvement. Tasmania's Department for Education and the Arts, *Parents and Schools Policy*, for example, stated (1992, p.3):

> While parent participation is generally accepted in school, it does not happen by chance.
>
> All schools, in consultation with parents, will develop their own policy on Parents and Schools. It should be based on key principles and include rights and responsibilities of parents. Colleges should make necessary adjustments to accommodate those students who are legally adults and those who live independently of their families.
>
> Key Principles
>
> 1. Parents are equal partners in the education of their children, there is, therefore, an acceptance, that both partners parents and teachers have much to learn from each other.
>
> 2. Parents require free and open communication within the school community; the principal has major responsibility to see that this happens.
>
> 3. Parents participate in many ways in the education of their children; all contributions they make should be valued.

4. Parents, given information from school, are able to help their children; particular areas for helping are in early literacy and numeracy.

5. Parents have a range of commitments and pressures; arrangements for their sharing in the education of their children should be flexible.

1.4 Devolution, Councils and Effectiveness

This sections draws together the preceding general comments and makes a case for the research in the Tasmanian context.

One of the trends throughout the Western World was a move towards devolution of management to local communities (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988). Given (1990) stated that there was a remarkable correlation in international and interstate chronologies of re-formation of educational administration. Part of this reformation was devolution of administration, and in many cases, governance.

All Australian states and territories are experimenting with forms of localisation and regionalization. Most are moving to school councils and total community involvement (Beare 1989, p.13). Chapman and Stevens (1989, p. 56) concluded that co-operative practices involving the whole school community are emphasised in many recent developments in Australian education. School Improvement Plans in the Northern Territory and Victoria, Effective Schools Development Program in NSW and Basic Learning In Primary Schools in Tasmania are examples of these initiatives.

Cresap, a Towers Perrin company, was commissioned in 1990 by the then Minister of Education and the Arts , Mr. Peter Patmore, to investigating the efficiency and effectiveness of the Tasmanian Education System. Many recommendations of its final report, *CRESAP'S FINAL REPORT: Review of the Department of Education and the Arts Tasmania,* were implemented. It had, as one of its key features, that schools would be encouraged to establish a formal link with their school community. It specifically stated that each school should have a school council with significant input into school operations (Cresap 1990, p. 52):

> Each school should establish a council of parents and/or the broader community to provide input and support to the operations of the school. The purpose of the council is to provide a close working relationship between school and community. The council will provide advice, guidance and support and will control expenditure of locally raised funds. The council should also be consulted on overall school issues and should endorse, but not have power of veto over, an annual plan and budget developed by the school. In case of significant dispute between the school and its council, the district superintendent should assist in resolving the dispute.

Terms like 'self governing' and 'self determining' which were usually associated with devolution, implied that the managers of schools needed to be responsive to parent/ community wishes. It was suggested that school policies would increasingly reflect their local communities' wishes and it was only opposition from teacher unions that was

preventing this from happening (Beare 1989, p. 21).

In Tasmania, schools often affected a greater proportion of the community than do many other enterprises, yet parents have traditionally had little say in what goes on within the school (Louden and Browne 1993, p. 128). By the early 1990's, parents and the wider community were increasingly 'demanding a say' and school managers and policy makers came to realise that they needed to respond to this (Beare 1990, p.10). In Tasmania, the implementation of the Cresap report hastened the formation of school parent/ community links.

King and Young (1986, p.153) suggested that schools were isolated organisations linked to a central authority. Other writers concerned with 'effective schools' suggested that close community relationships were important. Hallinger and Murphy (1987, p.11) found that parent involvement in United States school programs varied systematically with social contexts. They suggested that the extent of contact between school and community partly determined the expectations and methods of operation of the school.

If students came from families who put little or no emphasis on education and did not help facilitate the school's effort, Hallinger and Murphy argued, then rather than enhancing the effectiveness of the school, community interaction may work against effectiveness. Parents who encouraged education, became informed and supportive, and who took an active role in decision making, may have enhanced the effectiveness of the school.

The assumption, then, that more parent involvement would bring about more effective schools did not mean the same involvement and approach was appropriate for each school and its parent body. It did , however, highlight the need for information about parents'

perceptions of the school and education in general. This was particularly important in Tasmania given that as setting up of school councils was being strongly encouraged. Hallinger and Murphy (1987, p.13) argued, however, that it was a paradox that schools 'should', as suggested by reviewers of the literature, have parent-school relations as a component of their effective schools program, if such participation was demonstrated non-educative.

Sharples (1987, p.13) described the Effective Schools Program in Victoria as one where the work of the classroom was made relevant to the life and problems of the community.

> Such a program would in the view of the Victorian State Board of Education no doubt be considered responsive to "fundamental social realities" or at least those realities that have been defined and agreed by local community and educator representatives in a particular school.

She argued that it was possible to set up such a system although it would have to be viewed against the point of view that, in some areas, school policy managers and policy makers may have to oppose the community's view point. On the other hand she added that this was consistent with the idea that:

> in a culturally heterogeneous community or one where there are politically active minority interests and sectional lobbyists the possibility exists that collaboration may promote conflict and "consensus " may be impossible to attain (p.13).

Mortimore's (1993, p.13) research in London found that some parents form cliques. He

recommended that school leaders obtain detailed knowledge of the views of their community constituencies. A mechanism that will allow such information to be gathered by schools may then help break down this form of ignorance laden risk.

In more traditional and hierarchic education systems, parents have only had any real influence through political systems, often via the responsible minister and the media. School managers and policy makers have been largely "protected" from direct parental (community) influence (Blakers, 1982: Pettit and Hind 1992). Parental participation, however, may make decision making slower and more cumbersome, and therefore may not be readily accepted into a system which has been developed on a highly centralised pattern. It is now appropriate to explain the approach used to examine such issues in Tasmania.

1.5 Purposes of the Study

Research has long been needed in the area of parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of schools, especially in Tasmania. Data needed to be collected because devolution implied that school managers and policy makers were to be made more accountable to their local community. In sum, parents want to know what is going on, how their children are going and what can they do to help (Bauch, 1989).

A survey instrument was required to gather information on specific schools to help break down the sense of remoteness between school managers and policy makers, and the parent body. The data required were to allow school managers and policy makers to pick up and act on any 'weak signals coming from parents' as suggested by Beare *et al.* (1989 p. 246).

A survey instrument was designed to answer two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions that Tasmanian parents have of the effectiveness of public schools in Tasmania?

2. What are the differences in perceptions between various groups within the Tasmanian parent community?

Identifying perceptions and differences required both qualitative and quantitative methods:

1. Qualitative data from interviews, together with ideas gleaned from the literature, were used to construct and validate a questionnaire.
2. Quantitative data concerning perceptions and preferences were collected by the questionnaire.

There are limits to such an approach. Kerlinger (1986, p. 387), for example, argued that a remarkably accurate portrait of the community can be obtained using survey research. On the other hand the lack of depth of information obtained by surveying is also one of its disadvantages; it can focus too quickly. Here, the research was intended to pick up 'early weak signals' coming from the parent community. A combination of interviews and surveying was therefore chosen to maximise sensitivity and to indicate areas where more in-depth research was required.

The content categories for the instrument were developed from the interview data, taking into account the major dimensions of the school effectiveness literature. This research used similar content category headings to those developed by Gable, Hall and Murphy (1986); Clear School Mission, High Expectations, Safe and Orderly Environment,

Educational (Administrative) Leadership, Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress, and School Community Relations. These categories were consistent with effectiveness literature summarised by Mulford (1987). There was also coherence established with Reynolds' (1993; p. 11) categories.

Caution had to be exercised. Reynolds and Packer (1993, p.174) argued that simplistic assumptions of school improvement based on school effectiveness literature of the early eighties were no longer tenable. How the categories were refined is explained in Chapter 3.

While the research processes will be set out in greater detail in Chapter 3, it is noted here that parents were asked to respond on a 'Should Apply to This School' scale and a 'Does Apply to This School' scale. This is similar to the Effective School: Elementary (K-8) Parents' Questionnaire (Stoll and Fink 1988) which used 'Reflects This School' and 'Importance' scales. A Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD) five-point Likert scale was used.

The hope was that by obtaining the 'Should Apply to This School' (preferred), 'Does Apply to This School' response' (actual), school personnel would be able to identify how parents perceive school effectiveness with some precision. An analysis of the information, using similar techniques to those developed by Fraser and Fisher (1990), permitted at least four questions to be answered. There were the parents' perceptions of:

1. What should apply to the school.
2. What does apply to the school.
3. The difference between what should apply and does apply.
4. Areas where parents have no opinion and/or are unable to form an opinion.

The survey instrument was developed to acceptable standards of reliability and validity. Briefly, the original instrument was trialed with twenty parents of Leesville High School who were interviewed. A larger pilot sample of Leesville Primary and Leesville High School parent guardians was then surveyed.

Analysis of the two pilot studies indicated sufficient item and scale reliability and validity to proceed with a statewide study. A random stratified sample was taken from the population of 161 primary schools, 34 public schools and 26 district high schools, the total number of public schools at the time of the survey. Approximately 15% of these schools were sampled.

50 questionnaires were sent to schools, except those who had less than 50 sets of parents. Response rates from schools varied from 40% to 90%, with the average approximately 60%. The response rate compares favourably with the research of Gable *et al.* (1986) and McGaw, Piper, Banks and Evans (1993).

1.6 Layout of the Thesis

In this chapter the nature of the problem was outlined, terms were defined and barriers to parent involvement described. The literature regarding school councils and school effectiveness was introduced.

Chapter 2 is a review of the major writings on school effectiveness from North America, Great Britain and Australia, and includes brief comments about the literature from European and Asian countries. An account of the literature with regard to the terms 'devolution', 'restructuring' and 'the self managing school', with particular reference to the Tasmanian context, is then given. The final section gives brief descriptions of studies

into accountability from the parent perspective. These studies both informed and helped guide this study.

Chapter 3 is a description of the methodology adopted for this study. It is divided into three major sections. The first deals with the political context in which the research was undertaken and how political support was obtained.

The second major section of Chapter 3 attends to the design and development of the survey instrument, dealing with content categories, scales, statements and optional information. This section includes the statistical tests used to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument. The qualitative phase, which involved interviews, two trials and the associated statistical analysis, is then explained.

The third major section of Chapter 3 deals with the design and administration of the statewide survey of a stratified random sample of Tasmanian public school parents. The associated statistical analysis, which included factor analysis, was required to evaluate the reliability and validity of the instrument.

The results of the survey, which helped answer the research questions, are reported in Chapter 4. The first, rather large section is devoted to the analysis of Leesville High and Leesville Primary school's parent responses. The amount of data collected allowed both within-school as well as between-school investigations to be reported.

The second section of Chapter 4 deals with comparisons between high school, district high school and primary school parents' perceptions of school effectiveness. The third section reports the relationships between size of school and parents' perceptions. The fourth section reports data concerned with urban or rural locations, and parents'

perceptions, and relationships between the socioeconomic background of school community and parents' perceptions.

In Chapter 5 conclusions are presented in three areas. First are those concerned with the adequacy of the methodology. Second are practical implications for school leaders and policy makers. The thesis concludes with reflections on the theory of school effectiveness and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of the literature which underpins and informs this research. The first section deals with school effectiveness literature, including criticisms. Definitions of the term 'school effectiveness' are given, followed by an analysis of how school effectiveness has historically been determined. An iterative approach is then used to find a pragmatic consensus concerning the most important themes that are currently associated with school effectiveness.

The terms 'devolution', 'restructuring' and the 'self managing school' are then described. This section concludes with an argument that school effectiveness literature had an influence on the initial development and subsequent dissemination of the 'self managing school model' in Tasmania. An accountability vacuum from the client perspective is, however, highlighted as a potential problem.

The final section is a review of various attempts to overcome this accountability vacuum.

2.1 Introduction

Chapman (1994), wrote that the construction of educational theory was like a journey or voyage across a sea; which while being exciting and intellectually challenging, it was in uncharted waters and without a fully clear sense of the right direction. She suggested that

research intended to investigate school quality and/or effectiveness should have three aims (p. 20):

> to identify those beliefs and values that it appears people are least willing to give up or are likely to abandon in their talk and thinking about quality in schools;
>
> to grasp the theories that are embodied in these beliefs and values;
>
> to identify the 'touchstone' areas in which agreement appears to exist among and between groups on the criteria, characteristics and distinguishing marks they seek in schools, to which they would then attach the label 'good', 'effective' or of high quality.

Educational research itself has only come into prominence in its own right over the past thirty years or so, formerly being just a subsidiary subject of psychology or sociology. Mortimore (1993a, p. 154) also found that writing about school effectiveness was daunting because of the relative youth of the subject matter and the recent emergence of a conceptual framework.

In the overview of the effectiveness literature that follows, an attempt was made not to find 'uncontentious theories or definitions but rather try to establish what constitutes a pragmatic consensus' (Chapman 1994, p.5).

School effectiveness research burgeoned in the 1970s and 1980s. Collard (1984) considered the late 1960's and early 1970's pessimistic years for the effectiveness movement. Coleman (1966), Jencks, Smith, Acland, Bane, Cohen, Ginter, Heyns and Michelson (1972) and the British Plowdon Report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (Department of Education and Science, 1967) all concluded that it was the background of students that was the best predictor of success at schools and that schools had little influence upon the development of their pupils (Reynolds 1992).

The Coleman report (Collard 1984, p.149), for example was commissioned by the U.S. Congress to:

1) determine the extent to which cultural groups were segregated in schools;

2) survey the facilities and resources available in schools to see whether equal opportunities in the form of resources and facilities were provided;

3) investigate how much students learn in schools as measured by standardised tests; and

4) identify the relationship between student achievements and the resources and facilities available in schools.

The major findings included:

minority students did not perform as well as white pupils and this difference increased in the upper grades;

school characteristics appeared to have little influence upon achievement;

the socioeconomic background of the pupil seemed more important than any indices of school quality for example per pupil expenditure or size of the school library;

pupil achievement appeared to be related to the backgrounds and educational aspirations of other pupils; and that

the average quality of teachers was another important variable.

Jencks *et al.*, (1972) re-examined the Coleman data to try to determine what makes for success in pupils' adult lives. Their findings were even more pessimistic than Coleman's. They concluded that:

a) inequalities in educational opportunity which were derived from differences in status, income and opportunities are widespread and that advantaged groups are likely to make more use of the educational resources of the community than others;

b) native background and social background are the main factors which determine life success (as measured in terms of income) with luck another important variable;

c) no measurable school policy or resource showed a consistent relationship to the school's effectiveness in boosting achievement or eventual attainment. They have small inconsistent effects on achievement and changes in areas such as resources, segregation and curriculum tracking are unlikely to have significant effects on outcomes. Schools were also thought to have relatively uniform effects on the non-cognitive traits;

d) school factors have relatively little to do with life successes and schooling is more likely to reinforce and legitimise differences in social status than to

equalise opportunities. Even if opportunities were equalised there would still be little difference in pupils' patterns of life success; and

e) equality cannot be achieved through schooling and broader social interventions such as redistributing income and assuming wide control over children's environments are needed if equal opportunities are to be provided for all.

School effectiveness research began in the United Kingdom and the USA, largely as a result of the work of Coleman and Jencks *et al.* in the late sixties and early seventies starting with the seminal work of Weber (Mortimore 1993a, p.154). Since then, due largely to the International School Effectiveness Network (ISEN), there are researchers in Canada, Australia, Hong Kong, and an increasing number coming from European countries being led by the Netherlands concerned with school effectiveness. The sections that follow will concentrate on American, British, and Australian literature to set the context of this research. One baseline measure of the development of literature was provided by Levine and Lezotte (1990), who estimated that there were over four hundred references to school effectiveness. The number of publications may now have exceeded seven hundred (Mortimore 1993b, p.9).

Definitions of effective schools can be quite general (Sharples 1987, p.13):

> An Effective Schools Program is one where the work of the classroom is made relevant to the life and problems of the community. It should be responsive to 'fundamental social realities' or at least those realities that have been defined and agreed by the local community and educator representatives in a particular school.

Mortimore's (1991, p.9) definition used a value-adding criterion:

> An Effective School is one in which students progress further than might be expected from a consideration of intake.

McGaw *et al* (1991, p.2) adopted a similar definition in the Australian National context:

> An effective school is one that achieves greater student learning than might have been predicted from the context in which it works.

Cheng (1994, p.12) used a dynamic model perspective:

> School Effectiveness is the extent to which a school can adapt to the internal and external constraints and achieve the multiple goals of its multiple constituencies in the long run.

Edmonds (1979a, p.16) took a class specific and comparative approach that used mastery learning concepts:

> An Effective School brings to the children of the poor those minimal masteries of basic skills that now describe minimally successful pupil performance of the middle class.

Most definitions of effectiveness lie somewhere between these extremes. Bollen (1993, p. 5) cautioned that definition clarification and an accepted conceptual framework were pressing needs for the school effectiveness movement (Ainley 1995, p. 39).

Determination of school effectiveness in the late 1970s and 1980s was usually achieved statistically, using regression analysis. Expected means were determined, more usually than not based on basic numeracy and literacy test results, while controlling for socioeconomic factors, giving the 'expected' mean score for the school. The 'expected' score was then subtracted from the actual score, giving a residual score. The schools with the most positive scores were then assumed to be the most effective, and the most negative the most ineffective. Studies were then made of the most effective and ineffective schools to try to determine the reasons for the difference between effective and ineffective schools (Pukey and Smith 1982).

Rather than just focussing on scholastic scores on literacy and numeracy tests, measures of attendance, attitude toward schooling, classroom behaviour, as well as scholastic results, were used to gain deeper insights into effective schools (Reynolds 1993). Studies varied in their rigour, scope and methodologies but findings were fairly uniform. The amount that schools influenced students was not be as high as originally hypothesised but they did appear to have a direct effect on student achievement and life chances. The importance of effective classroom teaching also needed further investigation, as this may be more important than the effectiveness of the school as a whole, although they are clearly related (Mortimore 1993, p. 9; Bosker and Scheerens 1993, p.10).

D'Amico (1982) summarised the work of the late 1970s and early 1980s, see Table 2.1 below, and included British and American research. It was used to put forward the argument that effective schools are one of a kind and there are 'literally dozens of characteristics associated with effective schools' (p. 62).

Using Chapman's approach, that is, by looking for 'touchstone', common threads can be found, while recognising that each school may have idiosyncrasies. Edmonds' summary, which is an example of 'touchstone', is also quoted by D'Amico (1982, p.61), see Table 2.2 below. This was criticised because it was not the list he quoted in 1979 and it is unclear what research was used to arrive at the changed list of characteristics.

Nevertheless Edmonds' work will be examined in some detail in the next section because of its influence on the field.

Table 2.1
Three Major Reviews of School Effectiveness Literature (D'Amico 1982)

Possible Content Category	Brookover and Lezotte (1979)	Phi Delta Kappa (1980)	Rutter and others (1979)
Sense of Mission	Staff of improving schools believe all students can master the basic skill objectives and they believe the principal shares this belief.	Successful schools are characterised by clearly stated curricular goals and objectives	A school's atmosphere is influenced positively by the degree to which it functions as a coherent whole, with agreed ways of doing things that are consistent through-out the school and that have general support of all staff.
Expectations	Staff of improving schools expect their students to go on with their education.		Outcomes were better in schools where teachers expected the children to do well.
Academic Focus	Improving schools accept and emphasise the importance of basic skill mastery as prime goals and objectives	The greater the specificity or focus of the training programs in terms of goals or processes, the greater the likelihood of its success.	
Teaching	Staff of improving schools do not make excuses: they assumed responsibility for teaching basic skills and are committed to do so. Staff of improving schools spend more time achieving basic skill objectives. Teachers at improving schools are not satisfied or complacent about the status quo.	The behaviour of the designated school or program leader is crucial in determining school success. Successful urban schools frequently employ techniques of individualised instruction	Outcomes were better in schools where immediate, direct praise and approval were the prevalent means of classroom feedback. Outcomes were better in schools where teachers presented themselves as positive role models demonstrating punctuality, concern for the physical well being of the pupils, and restraint in the use of physical punishment.
Environment		Structured learning environments are particularly successful in urban classrooms.	Outcomes were better in schools that provided pleasant working conditions for the pupils.
Leadership	Principals at improving schools are assertive instructional leaders and disciplinarians, and they assume responsibility for	The leaders' attitudes toward urban education and expectations for school or program success	

	the evaluation of the achievement of basic skill objectives.	determine the impact of the leader on exceptional schools.	
Parental Involvement	There is more parent-initiated contact and involvement at improving schools (even though the overall amount of parent involvement is less).	Successful urban schools are characterised by high levels of parental contact with the school and parental involvement with school activities.	
System/Political Support		Reductions in adult/child ratios are associated with positive school performance Successful schools are often supported with special project funds from federal, state and local sources.	
Accountability	Staff at improving schools accept the concept of accountability and are involved in developing (or using) accountability models.		Children's behaviour was better in schools where teachers were readily available to be consulted by children about problems and where many children consulted with teachers.
Miscellaneous	The compensatory education programs in improving schools de-emphasise paraprofessional involvement and teacher involvement in the selection of Comp-Ed bound students.	Successful schools frequently use staff development or in service training programs to realise their objectives. Resources and facility manipulations alone are insufficient to affect school outcomes.	Outcomes were better in schools where a high proportion of children held some kind of position of responsibility in the school system.

Table 2.2
Edmond's Summary of Proposals (D'Amico 1982)

Clarity that pupil acquisition of the basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities
There is a climate of expectations in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement.
Administrative leadership is strong and without it the disparate elements of good schooling can be neither brought together nor kept together
A means is present by which pupil progress can be frequently monitored.
There is an atmosphere that is orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to instructional leadership.

2.2 North American Research

The work of Brookover and Lezotte, Edmonds, Maddern, Lawson and Sweet, Weber and Friedrickson has dominated research reports from North America during the late 1970's and early 1980's.

Edmonds (1979a; 1979b; 1982; see also Brandt 1982) politicised the effectiveness movement and is cited universally as one of the founders of the school effectiveness research. Edmonds was an American school board superintendent and practitioner in charge of inner city schools of New York. Most of his findings were based on research with elementary and junior schools. Edmonds was an educational reformer rather than a scientific analyst and his work was based on the belief that student performance depended more on the characteristics of the school than on the social and physical environment of the student. His article *Effective Schools for the Urban Poor* (1979a) is one of the most quoted articles in the school effectiveness literature. As well as being an article based on scientific research, it is also, quite unashamedly, a political document.

Edmonds made his bias clear to the reader. He was interested in equity and in particular, equity for the urban poor. 'I measure our progress as a social order by our willingness to advance equity interests of the least among us' (1979, p.15), especially in the distribution of primary goods and services.

He proceeded on the assumption that there has never been a time in American schools when teachers have not known all they need to in order to teach all those they choose to teach. Edmonds recognised the importance of the child's character and home background but rejected the notion that schools are relieved of their obligations to the poor, claiming that it was more a matter of politics whether or not we choose to teach effectively the children of the poor.

One measure of Edmonds' influence was that Senator Hawkins (1984) presented the Effective Schools Development in Education Act of 1984 to the American Congress which was based heavily Edmonds' writings. In many senses, Edmonds (1979a, 1979b, 1982b) campaigned in response to Coleman and Jenck's conclusions and methodology. He commented (1979a, p.23):

> Being white and of conventional wisdom is not, of course, an intrinsic disability. However, the combination does preclude repudiation of those of our social science notions that are pernicious when discussing school reform. Repudiation of the social science notion that family background is the principal cause of pupil acquisition of basic skills is probably prerequisite to successful reform of public schooling for the children of the poor.

Edmonds disagreed with Coleman (1966) and Jencks *et al.* (1972), whom he considered had 'satisfied' themselves and other researchers that low achievement by poor people derived principally from internal disabilities characterising the poor. Weber (1971), he argued, had focussed on four inner-city schools whose reading results were higher than expected. All had strong leadership from the principal, high expectations of their pupils, an orderly, relatively quiet and pleasant environment. All emphasised basic skill acquisition by careful and frequent evaluation of pupil progress. Edmonds argued that the State of New York's Office of Education Performance Review (1974) confirmed Weber's major findings.

Madden *et al.*(Edmonds 1979a) were also held to have confirmed Weber's work. They studied twenty one pairs of matched elementary schools based on pupil characteristics and concluded that teachers in higher achieving schools felt that the principal provided them with a significantly greater amount of support than the lower achieving schools and that they were more task orientated, applying appropriate learning principles in their classroom. Higher achieving schools provided more evidence of student monitoring, student effort, happier children and an atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers spent more time on social studies, and less time on both mathematics and physical education and about the same time on reading/language and science in higher achieving schools. They also had a large number of adult volunteers, fewer paid reading aides, using the former for non-teaching tasks. Higher achieving schools had access to more materials outside of the

classroom and had access to district administration for support. Teachers had fewer groups in their classroom and in general reported being happy with their work.

These findings reinforced the importance of leadership, expectations, atmosphere, and instructional emphasis as consistently essential institutional determinants of pupil performance.

Brookover and Lezotte (1979) were similarly influential. They concluded that 'improving schools' were clearly different from the 'declining schools' in the emphasis their staff placed on the accomplishment of the basic reading and mathematics objectives. The improving schools were shown to accept and emphasise the importance of these goals and objectives, while declining schools gave much less emphasis to such goals and did not specify them as fundamental. Brookover and Lezotte studied six improving and two declining schools. They used trained interviewers who conducted interviews and administered questionnaires to a stratified cross section of school personnel. Their findings are now examined in some detail.

There was a clear contrast found in the evaluations that teachers and principals made of the students in improving and declining schools. The staffs of the improving schools tended to believe that all of their students could master the basic objectives. Furthermore, the teachers perceived that the principal shared this belief. They tended to report higher and increasing levels of student ability, while in declining schools, teachers projected the

belief that students' ability levels were low, and therefore, unlikely to master even basic objectives concerned with literacy and numeracy.

Similarly, Brookover and Lezotte found that staff members of the improving schools held decidedly higher expectations and increasing levels of expectations with regard to the educational accomplishments of their students. In contrast, staff members in declining schools were much less likely to believe that their students would complete high school or college.

In contrast to the declining schools, teachers and principals of the improving schools were found to be much more likely to assume responsibility for teaching the basic reading and mathematical skills and were much more committed to doing so. The staff of the declining schools felt there was not much that teachers could do to influence the achievements of their students. They tended to displace the responsibility for skill learning on to the parents or on to the students themselves.

Since the teachers in the declining schools believed that there was little they could do to influence basic skill learning, it followed that they spent less time in direct reading instruction than did teachers in improving schools. The greater emphasis on reading and math objectives in the improving schools resulted in these schools devoting a much greater amount of time toward achieving reading and mathematics objectives.

Brookover and Lezotte found a clear difference in the principal's role in the improving and declining schools. In the improving schools, the principal was more likely to be an instructional leader, more assertive in his/her institutional leadership role, more of a disciplinarian, and perhaps most of all, assumed responsibility for the evaluation of the achievement of basic objectives. The principals in the declining schools appeared to be permissive and emphasised informal and collegial relationships with teachers. They put more emphasis on general public relations and less emphasis upon evaluation of the school's effectiveness in providing a basic education for the students.

The improving school staff appeared to show a greater degree of acceptance of the concept of accountability and had a better developed model of accountability. Certainly, they accepted the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) tests as one indication of their effectiveness to a much greater degree than did staff in declining schools.

Generally, Brookover and Lezotte found that teachers in improving schools were less satisfied than the staff in the declining schools. The higher levels of reported staff satisfaction and morale in the declining schools seemed to reflect a pattern of complacency and satisfaction with the current levels of educational attainment. On the other hand, the improving school staff members appear more likely to experience some tension and dissatisfaction with the existing conditions.

Differences in the level of parent involvement in the improving and declining schools were not clear cut. It seemed that there was less overall parent involvement in the improving schools, yet the improving schools had higher levels of parent initiated involvement. This suggested the nature of the involvement by parents was important rather than just the amount.

In general, the improving schools were not characterised by a high emphasis upon paraprofessional staff or heavy involvement of the regular teachers in the selection of students to be placed in compensatory education programs. The declining schools seemed to Brookover and Lezotte to have a greater number of different staff involved in reading instruction and more teachers involvement in identifying students who were to be placed in compensatory education programs. The regular classroom teachers in the declining schools reported spending more time planning for noncompensatory education reading activities and gave a greater emphasis to programmed instruction. Another general consequence of Brookover and Lezotte's research was a general review of school effectiveness research methodology.

Edmonds and Frederikson (1978) for example, clarified their school effectiveness factors by re-examining the work of Lezotte *et al.* (1974), who had studied reading and mathematics scores from a sample of 25% of students from 20 schools in Detroit, as well as using Frederiksen's own (1966) Equal Educational Opportunity Survey. Edmonds and

Frederikson then concluded with 'the most tangible and indispensable characteristics of effective schools' (1979, p. 22) were that:

> They have strong administrative leadership without which the disparate elements of good schooling can neither brought together nor kept together.
>
> Schools that are instructionally effective for poor children have a climate of expectation in which no children are permitted to fall below minimum but efficacious levels of achievement.
>
> The school's atmosphere is orderly without being rigid, quiet without being oppressive, and generally conducive to the instructional business at hand.
>
> Effective schools get that way partly by making it clear that pupil acquisition of basic skills takes precedence over all other school activities.
>
> When necessary, school energy and resources can be diverted from the other business in furtherance of the fundamental objectives.
>
> There must be some means by which pupil progress can be frequently monitored. These means may be as traditional as classroom testing on the day's lesson or as advanced as criterion referenced systemwide standardised

measures. The point is that some means must exist in the school by which the principal and the teachers remain constantly aware of pupils progress in relationship to instructional objectives.

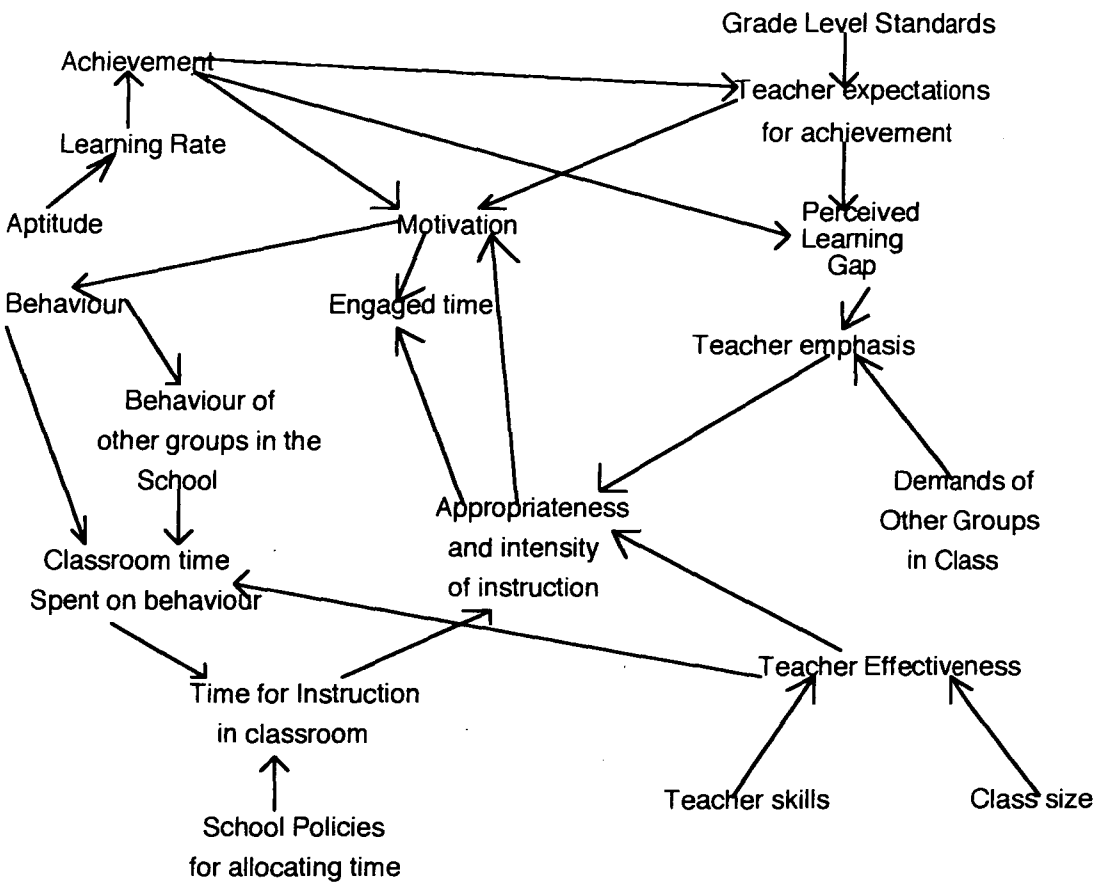
The American effectiveness literature of the early eighties, in particular Edmonds' ideas, was often criticised because it was primarily concerned with basic literacy and numeracy and appeared to neglect family background (Scott and Walberg 1979). Cuban (1983) went further and urged caution about using the outcomes of school effectiveness research to make blueprints for school improvement. He argued that some schools were demonstrably more effective than others but to create effective schools was another matter. In his terms the language was 'fuzzy', suggesting that 'effectiveness' was a constricted concept partly because the research had only been carried out in elementary schools (Farrar *et al. 1984*; Firestone *et al.* 1982; Gaddy 1988).

The debate was then informed by experiments. Eubanks and Levine (1983), for example, used the Edmonds' model to devise school development strategies and were encouraged by the improvement made by students on standardised tests. However, they added a cautionary remark; that although there was initial improvement in basic literacy and numeracy when direct methods of instruction were used, ways had to be found to develop higher order cognitive development if there was to be continued improvement by students.

Brookover (1987, 1993) countered the criticism that effective schools researchers put too much emphasis on basic skills by saying that he was not aware of anyone associated with effective schools research who considered that only basic levels of numeracy and literacy should be taught. He went further, nevertheless, and argued that they were almost universally accepted as an appropriate educational goal. This line of debate spluttered for a period.

Murphy *et al.*(1985) then set a fresh direction when he found that different combinations of variables combined to create effectiveness in different schools and showed that there wasn't a simple 'formula' for school effectiveness. Clausett and Gaynor (1982, p. 56) used their 'dynamic theory of schooling' model (Table 2.3) to relate the variables associated with school effectiveness. They acknowledged that the uncertainty of the relative importance of variables was continuing to confound theory development. Nevertheless, they concluded that school improvement could be enhanced by longitudinal monitoring and the assessment of pupil achievement, giving feedback against standards of assessment, maximising instruction time and committing resources to basic skills, all of which require strong administrative leadership. The interactive pattern of variables illustrated in Table 2.3 summarises their understanding of causal relationships. The arrows indicate the direction of causality.

Table 2.3
Possible Linkage of Effectiveness Variables (Clausett and Gaynor 1986)



To summarise to this point, despite criticism, effective schools research was used increasingly in school districts and schools during the 1980s. In 1986, a National Center for Effective Schools was established at the University of Wisconsin. The variables that were most commonly used were clear and focussed school mission, strong instructional leadership, positive learning climate, high expectations for success, opportunity to learn and time on task, frequent monitoring of student performances and positive home school

relations (Taylor 1990). Similar findings were being used in the United Kingdom, the subject of the next section.

2.3 British Research

Effective schools research in Great Britain is probably only 15 years old. Reynolds (1994) cited three factors which caused a hostile environment for school effectiveness research. They are difficulties obtaining access to schools for comparative research purposes, the findings of Coleman and Jencks and similar findings by the British Plowden Committee 1967 and the absence of valid and reliable measures of school climate. The intellectual hegemony of traditional British educational research, with its emphasis on the primacy of individual, family and community based explanations for children's educability, created a hostile environment for school effectiveness research. Critics of Rutter *et al.* (1979) and other early effectiveness research described them as being widely applauded but highly implausible (Reynolds 1994, p. 36: 1989, p. 11: 1993, p. 2).

In general, Smith and Tomlinson (1989), Mortimore (1988) and Reynolds (1976) found that schools do have an effect on pupils, with social class, sex and race being poor predictors of school performance. There were differences between subject areas, particularly in secondary schools. They also found that school performances varied markedly over time, with their impact on boys and girls and different racial groups changing in a hard-to-determine pattern. The details of their findings are now discussed.

Rutter *et al.* (1979) argued that the important within school variables determining effectiveness were:

> the balance of intellectually able and less able children in the school, since when a preponderance of pupils in a school were likely to be unable to meet the expectations of scholastic success, peer group cultures and an anti-academic or anti-authority emphasis may have formed;
>
> the system of rewards and punishments - ample use of rewards, praise and appreciation being associated with favourable outcomes;
>
> school environment good working conditions, responsiveness to pupil needs and good care and decoration of buildings were associated with better outcomes;
>
> ample opportunities for children to take responsibility and to participate in the running of their school lives appeared conducive to favourable outcomes;
>
> successful schools tended to make good use of homework, to set clear academic goals and to have an atmosphere of confidence as to their pupils' capacities;

outcomes were better where teachers provided good models of behaviour by means of good time-keeping and willingness to deal with pupil problems;

findings on group management in the classroom suggested the importance of preparing lessons in advance, of keeping the attention of the whole class, of unobtrusive discipline, of focussing on rewarding good behaviour and of swift action to deal with disruption; and

outcomes were more favourable when there was a combination of firm leadership together with a decision-making process in which all teachers felt that their views were represented.

Reynolds' (1976; 1982) studies were based on pupils' attitude to school, teacher perception of pupils, within school organisational factors and school resource levels. He reached similar conclusions to Rutter *et al.*, emphasising high proportion of pupils in authority, low levels of institutional control, positive academic expectations, low levels of coercive punishment, a high level of pupil involvement, small overall size, more favourable teacher-pupil ratios and tolerant attitudes towards enforcing rules regarding dress, manners and morals.

Mortimore (1993 p.10) collated what he considered to be the most important mechanisms found to be associated with school effectiveness. They were not restricted to British research but were consistent with the findings of his 1988 study based on basic numeracy and literacy tests and truancy rates. The most important mechanisms he identified were purposeful leadership of the staff by the principal and deputy principal, involvement of teachers, consistency among teachers, a structured day, intellectually challenging teaching, a work-centred environment, a limited focus within sessions, communication between teachers and pupils, thorough record keeping, parental involvement and a positive climate.

2.4 Australian Research

School effectiveness research in Australia, which tended to have its origins in the work of Edmonds, Brookover *et al.* or Rutter, was used, to guide school improvement, to varying degrees throughout Australia during the 1980's. Walker and Murphy (1986, p. 78) suggested that school effectiveness findings 'offered a powerful and compatible opportunity' for the Disadvantaged Schools Program to provide a more complete education for their students, expressing the view that effectiveness research would not interfere with but enhance the program. Walker and Murphy (1986, p.78) put forward a School Effectiveness Framework which has School Technology and Environment Components as explained in Table 2.4

Table 2.4
School Effectiveness Framework (Walker and Murphy 1986, p.78)

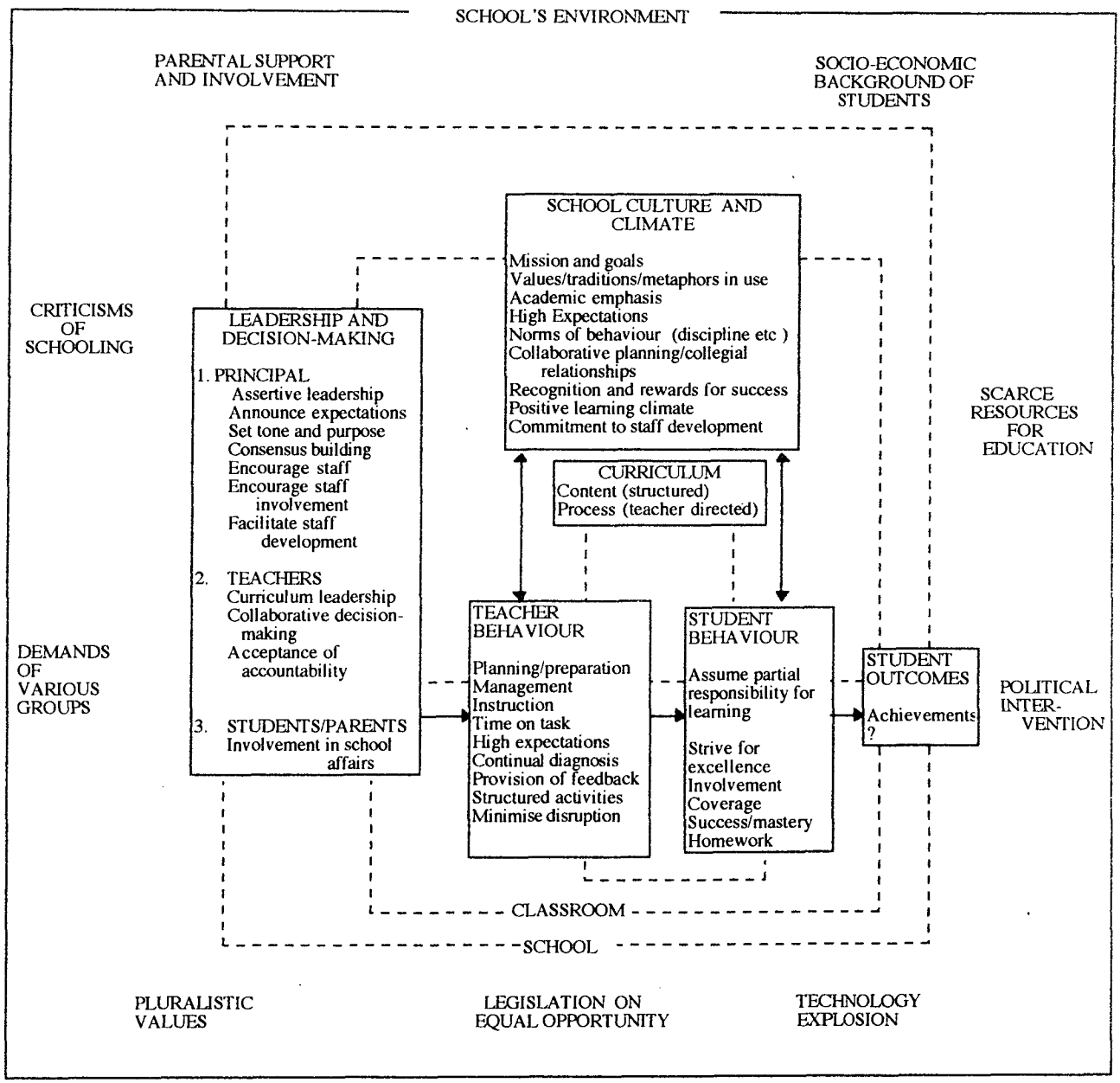
School Technology	Environment
Tightly Coupled Curriculum	Opportunities for Meaningful Student Involvement
Opportunity to Learn	Widespread Rewards and Recognition
Direct Instruction	Collaborative Organisational Procedures
Clear Academic Mission and Focus	High Student Expectations
Instruction Leadership	High Home-School Cooperation and Support
Frequent Monitoring	Safe and Orderly Environment
Structured Staff Development	Students and Staff Cohesion and Support

Variables found to be relevant and of particular importance for school improvement were: high expectations, safe and orderly environment, clear academic mission and focus, tightly coupled curriculum, opportunity to learn, direct instruction, instructional leadership and frequent monitoring (Walker and Murphy 1986, p.78).

Duignan (1986, p. 60) also summarised the international literature on school effectiveness literature and developed a conceptual framework, presented below as Table 2.5, for school effectiveness variables, although he remained somewhat equivocal about the research. While his framework illustrated that the variables formed a complex web of interrelationships, he drew the conclusion that attempts to manipulate independent factors in isolation was unlikely to lead to school improvement (Duignan 1986, p. 70).

Townsend (1994, p. 46) reached a similar conclusion proposing an interactive three dimensional model that could be used to guide school improvement.

Table 2.5
Conceptual Framework School Effectiveness (Duignan 1986)



Dimmock (1993), while acknowledging methodological problems previously mentioned in section 2.3, concluded that by the late 1980's there was sufficient consistency in the research literature to allow for valid generalisations. He listed the following variables as being consistently displayed by schools achieving high levels of student academic learning (p.54); strong leadership, a sense of mission and clear goals, a supportive climate, monitoring of performance, quality teaching and staff development, parental involvement and district support.

He added that all of these characteristics were alterable at the school level but cautioned that just having these characteristics was no guarantee for success. They were, he suggested, as Duignan and Townsend emphasised, inter-related.

Caldwell and Spinks (1988, p. 28) claimed that their books, *The Self Managing School (1988)* and *Leading the Self Managing School (1992),* were based on effective schools research, although the sources were not actually cited, and on research material from The Effective Resource Allocation in Schools Project (ERAP). There appears to be considerable similarities between the research cited in the chapter 'The Movement to Create Excellent Schools' in *Creating an Excellent School (1989)*, which Caldwell co-authored with Beare and Millikan, and the research of Rutter, Weber, Brookover and Lezotte, Edmonds and Friederickson. This was taken to mean the research that Caldwell and Spinks referred to in their books. Given the influence of their two books, this is a matter of some concern.

Caldwell and Spinks' methodology is, therefore, of considerable interest and will be discussed in detail. They reviewed the literature, acknowledging its limitations, and listed characteristics of an effective school. These characteristics were validated or otherwise by a group, termed the Criteria for Effectiveness Advisory Committee. It comprised practicing teachers and administrators in Tasmanian government and non-government schools, academics and administrators. No other details were made available and the limits of local expert panels were not discussed.

This process, nevertheless, resulted in a list of forty three characteristics divided into Curriculum, Decision Making, Resources, Outcomes, Leadership, Climate, Process and Outcomes being adopted. Table 2.6 below, illustrates the characteristics that were associated with each dimension. There was considerable agreement between this and Duignan's framework, which was not cited.

However, as elsewhere in the world, such effectiveness literature has been subjected to considerable criticism in Australia. According to Townsend (1994, p.16) the term 'effective school' is treated with some mistrust and concern. In his opinion, the narrow focus of the definition used by most American researchers centring around a narrow test-score orientation was a major reason for the disquiet

Table 2.6
Effectiveness Variables (Caldwell and Spinks 1988, p. 31)

Dimension	Characteristics
Curriculum	Clearly stated educational goals, a well balanced curriculum, involving appropriate skills, meeting the needs of students and involving parents in student educational activities
Decision Making	A high degree of involvement from staff, parents and community involved in decision making.
Resources	Adequate resources to enable the staff to teach effectively and motivated capable teachers.
Leadership	Sharing of duties and resources consistent with educational needs, responsiveness to needs of staff, concerned with their own and the staff's professional development, has high level of awareness, establishes effective links with relevant groups, is flexible, risk taking and in a process of continual renewal.
Outcomes	Satisfaction that goals are achieved, actual actions match intended actions and acceptance of procedures as well as low dropout rates, high levels of achievement on test scores and successful post school placement of students.
Climate	Sets of goals and values, staff and student loyalty and morale, environment, mutual respect for staff and teachers, open communication, commitment to learning, high expectations, respect for property, student responsibility, discipline, low absentee and suspension rates, staff absences, cohesiveness and transfer applications.
Process	Needs and priority, allocation of resources, involvement from staff, students, parents and community, satisfaction with the process, evaluation of process, appropriate procedures and flexibility.

Angus (1994, p. 63) pointed out that much of the effectiveness research was about determining the school effect over and above the family effect and was critical of researchers who insisted on allocating statistical significance to various factors. The school effect was considered the 'left over' component with family background, social class and notion of context typically regarded as 'noise' and as 'background' factors which had to be statistically 'controlled for' and 'stripped away', so that researchers could concentrate on the important domain of school factors. He found this approach to be implausible.

This resulted, he said, in the interactive relationship between schools, culture and society not being considered in school effectiveness research, with schools concerned with educating the young in the most effective manner, regardless of their backgrounds, much

in line with 'New Right' ideology. This did nothing, he claimed, to address the political social and educational issues such as the 'hidden curriculum'. According to Angus (1994) the nature of knowledge, the culture of schooling and in whose interests schools were to be effective seemed to be excluded from consideration.

Schools were being populated, Angus claimed, by 'strong leaders' and 'teacher technicians'. He further claimed that students were hardly 'social subjects', engaged in the core technology of teaching and learning in a decontextualised and impersonal world of school effectiveness. Effective students, regardless of class, race, gender or culture merely adjusted to and accommodated what was presented to them. School effectiveness research was being used to lend spurious support to the 'right' because it advocated the isolationist, apolitical approach to education in which it was assumed that educational problems could be fixed by the use of effective schools procedures (Angus 1994).

There were similarities yet interesting paradoxes between the criticisms of Angus and the original rationale put forward by Edmonds in favour of school effectiveness research. Edmonds argued from a political perspective, declaring that it was unjust that some students couldn't learn because of their background and pointed to research that showed the contrary. He argued that schools could overcome context and background, declaring his model as a way forward. In contrast, Angus suggested that effectiveness research was being used for the opposite reasons that Edmonds put forward. The middle ground seems to accommodate the interactive Australian models proposed by Walker and Murphy

(1986), Duignan (1986), Caldwell *et al.* (1988, 1992), Beare *et al.*(1989) and Townsend (1994). They all recognised the importance of background and context while illuminating alterable within-school factors.

2.5 Summary of School Effectiveness Literature

Effective schools research has been subjected to a good deal of micro-political analysis of how much each variable was responsible for particular outcomes. According to Murphy (1993) and Brookover (1993) this micro-level critique was essential, and yet, analyses almost invariably ignored the real legacy of the effective schools movement; 'the core principles that comprise its infrastructure'. Four important summary points about the effectiveness movement were made.

Underpinning the effective schools movement was the belief that all students could learn. Murphy (1993) and Brookover (1993) argued that this belief was the most important principle of effective schools research that needed to be taken into the future. This was a departure from psychologically based models and their associated 'bell curve' distributions of success which sorted students into the 'can learn, can't learn' groups to the sociological model which put emphasis on the conditions that helped determine outcomes possible in schools. The belief that schools had little effect on student outcomes was being challenged and this challenge was the core of the movement. A second important legacy of the movement was the focus on the equitable distribution of the

important outcomes of schooling. Thirdly, effectiveness research insisted that the school community take a fair share of the responsibility for what happened to the youth in its care. The fourth and the most powerful and enduring lesson from all the research on effective schools was that the better schools were more tightly linked structurally, symbolically and culturally than the less effective ones. Staff, parents and students shared a sense of direction (Bosker and Scheerens 1993, p.10).

It was significant that the International Effective Schools Network's official journal was titled *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*. This symbolised the recognition that the two fields, school effectiveness and improvement, needed to develop together. Effective schools had certain common characteristics but how to make an ineffective school an effective school was not at all clear. It was generally accepted that there was no simple 'recipe' (Reynolds 1994; Mortimore 1995; Murphy 1995; McGaw 1993; Lezotte 1990) although Rossmiller and Holcomb (1993, p. 25) suggested that effective school processes provided a generic framework for change.

The effective school literature in Australia had its origins in American and British literature and developed a framework that was relevant to the Australian situation although, as in other countries, there was considerable criticism of the literature. The work of Caldwell and Spinks which has been used in every state of Australia to varying degrees, and importantly for this study, was the genesis of procedures to implement self management in Tasmanian schools. This issue will be returned to in the next section

which examines how devolution of administrative responsibilities altered perceptions of school effectiveness.

2.6 Devolution, Restructuring and Self Managing Schools

In discussing a 'period of dramatic transformation of schooling' (Caldwell 1993, p. 2) Caldwell (1992, p. 7) postulated ten megatrends in education:

1. There will be a powerful but sharp focused role for central authorities, especially in respect to formulating goals, setting priorities, and building frameworks of accountability.

2. National and global considerations will become increasingly important, especially in respect to curriculum and an education system that is responsive to national needs within a global economy

3. Within centrally determined frameworks, government schools will become largely self-managing, and the distinctions between government and non-government schools will narrow.

4. There will be unparalleled concern for the provision of a quality education for each individual.

5. There will be a dispersion of the educative function, with telecommunications and computer technology ensuring that much learning which occurs in schools or institutions at post-compulsory levels will occur at home and in the workplace.

6. The basics in education will be expanded to include problem-solving, creativity and a capacity for life-long learning and re-learning.

7. There will be an expanded role for the arts and spirituality, defined broadly in each instance; there will be high level of 'connectedness' in curriculum.

8. Women will claim their place among the ranks of leaders in education, including those at the most senior levels.

9. The parent and community role in education will be claimed or reclaimed.

10. There will be unparalleled concern for service by those who are required or have the opportunity to support the work of schools

During the 1980's and 1990's, reforms in educational administration throughout the western world reflected all or most of these trends in a remarkably consistent manner

(Beare 1991; Beare *et al.*, 1993; Given 1990; Dimmock 1993; Hallinger *et al.* 1993; Caldwell 1993). A commonly used term internationally was 'restructuring' although it did not have the same meaning in each country.

Restructuring meant any or some combination of the following (Hughes 1991, p.55):

> the reorganisation of education systems so that there was greater political control;
>
> the development of a flatter and smaller administrative and services structure with a managerial emphasis for senior administrators;
>
> the administrative and political processes by which schools could be closed with minimum public fuss;
>
> the devolution of responsibility to schools for their own management, usually with a requirement to involve parents in policy development and decisions;
>
> an emphasis on the operation of schools- 'effective schools', 'excellent schools' making use of research linking school characteristics with educational achievement; and

an emphasis on teachers and teaching - perhaps through the industrial arena and career structures - perhaps through the Schools Council's preferred route of teacher development.

The recent restructuring reforms were different from previous reforms. They didn't start with curriculum changes nor did they originate with teachers and educators (Beare 1991 p.19; Mulford 1994, p.14). Macpherson (1992, p. 20) reviewed Australian state government reports and found that 'a perception of poor economic efficiency, low educational effectiveness of management and the limited political ineffectiveness of governance in state education' were the causal conditions which generated the perception of a political crisis in state educational management. This perception, coupled with Australia's economy going into recession, was largely responsible for the 'restructuring movement' in all state systems.

The structural and management changes were usually initiated from groups outside the education system. The 1980's and 1990's represent periods of public and political mistrust in educators. By 1991, of the departments of education in Australia and New Zealand, only one was headed by an educator promoted through the system (Beare 1991, p. 22). Promotion from within the organisation tends to be a sign of trust, promotion from without tends to be a sign of mistrust (Hilmar 1985 p. 22).

Hughes (1991 p. 55) went further, commenting that in Australia, New Zealand, USA and UK there was 'profound mistrust' of administrators by politicians, which was partly responsible for similar responses to restructuring by both right and left wing governments. No matter what the political persuasion, the response has been a reduction of the extent and an increase in the effectiveness of central control of education. This had been accompanied by an increase of responsibility at the school level, based on the increased participation of parents as well as teachers in policy decisions.

Increased central control was also evidenced by the change in operation of the Australian Education Council (AEC). This neo-nationalist political organisation comprised state ministers, all other stakeholders not having any standing, who negotiated national education policies behind closed doors (Macpherson 1992, p. 22). One of its agencies, the Curriculum Corporation, then marketed curriculum materials that cohered with their policies. This was a major departure from past policies. Caldwell (1992, p.63) did not consider this a 'disturbance of the right order' but rather that a national perspective was emerging which he considered made good sense in the prevailing context. He added that the AEC deliberated on reports which they commissioned. For example, the Mayer Committee had 27 representatives from many different sectors of the Australian community.

Comparative studies of the USA, UK, New Zealand, Australia and Japan education policies in the 1990's showed remarkable commonalities (Given 1991). Phrases like

'excellence', 'quality', 'school effectiveness', 'equity', 'efficiency' and 'accountability' became common. School based management was almost universal, with words like 'decentralisation' and 'devolution' both implying central authorities giving power away or down to schools, an image that should have been challenged (Beare 1991, p. 21).

The 'restructuring movement' was also influenced by management patterns in the private sector that were being driven by politics of privatisation at federal levels and the secular belief that government institutions should act more like private corporations. The resultant emphases have been on excellence and choice with far less attention to equity. There was an underlying assumption that public schools ought to be made to look like private schools. The reconstruction highlighted the political ideals of liberty and choice. Parental choice and deregulation of schools were in the ascendancy, with ideals of equity (equality) considered far less important (Caldwell 1993, p.10). The societal dissonance being experienced in the late twentieth century was also shown to be a result of demographically or economically induced tensions (Beare 1991, p. 22; Guthrie *et al.* p. 24).

School site councils were introduced either by coercion or by strong suggestion yet it was not clear why councils were formed, who really wanted them and whose political purpose they served (Beare *et al.* 1993, p. 9). Common dilemmas included their roles and composition and how they were to relate to the role of the principal. Naive devolution did not prevent instances of provider capture, constitutions failing to discriminate between

local stakeholder groups or participants failing to recognise the limits of representative democracy (Macpherson 1992, p.25).

Economic factors influenced the restructuring movement. A common view was that education was required to sustain the development of the post-industrial economy. Economic rationalism influenced the functions of schools, with them being expected to compete for customers and account for themselves in increasingly sophisticated ways using a free market analogy (Beare *et al.* 1993, p. 10). National governments were increasingly being involved in education even though it had not been one of their prime functions. Economic efficiencies were demanded in Australia because its economy was in recession, which resulted in cuts to the education budget (Louden *et al.* 1993, p.126).

Countries adopted ideas and models from one another at a rate not previously seen, in part an outcome of improved telecommunications and international travel. Education, in common with other aspects of society, had to be considered as part of a global society (Beare *et al.* 1993, p. 10).

It was predicted that during the 1990's would continue to be a period of and realignment because of widespread values disequilibrium between liberty, equality, equity and fraternity (Beare 1991, p. 22; Guthrie *et al.* 1993, p. 26).

Beare (1991) was pessimistic about the outcomes of restructuring, considering that education was worse off at the end of the 1980's than at the beginning and saying that there was 'a wasteful demise of some of the county's most valued educators ... many schools and tertiary institutions with enviable reputations amalgamated or destroyed' (p.24). He was critical of the lack of fundamental curriculum reform at the classroom level. The reforms emphasised changed management structures seemingly geared to international competitiveness. In his view, restructuring heavily influenced by economic rationalism did not seem to have improved schools for students.

Caldwell (1993, p.169) was much more supportive of restructuring than was Beare. He considered that the change in governance of public education, which he agreed had crossed national ideological boundaries, was appropriate given the universal concern for effectiveness, equity, efficiency, accountability and adaptability. A capacity for self management at the school level with guidelines centrally determined was, according to Caldwell (1993, p. 5) 'an eminently sensible pattern of governance'. More importantly he considered that how the transition was managed was the most important problem of the 1990's. This indicated a change in emphasis by Caldwell from 'what' to 'how'.

Caldwell (1992, p. 4) described a self-managing school as one where there 'has been significant and consistent decentralisation of authority to the school allowing it to make decisions in relation to the allocation of resources'. Resources included knowledge, technology, power, material, people, time and finance.

Sharp (1993a) used a unidimensional continuum to illustrate the relative movement towards self management since 1973. Inputs, structures, processes and environment were the most important dimensions, as shown in Table 2.7 below. There was considerable coherence between these dimensions and Calwell and Spinks' dimensions as illustrated in Table 2.6.

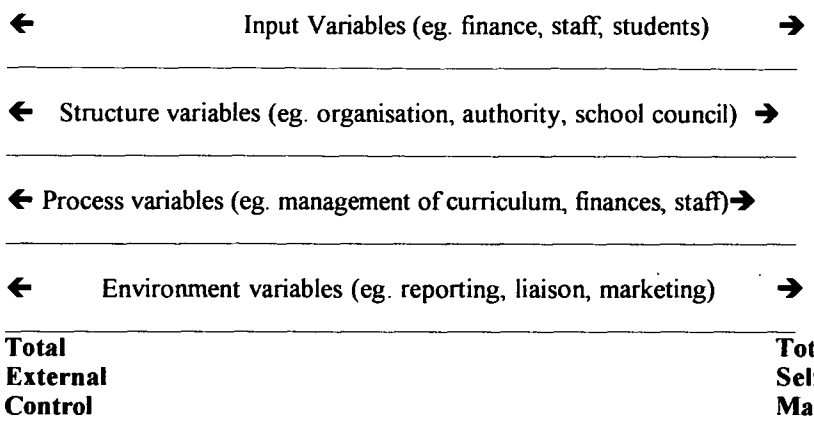
Table 2.7
The Characteristics of School Dimensions (Sharpe 1993)

Dimension	Characteristics
Inputs	Establishment of the school; mission, goals, purpose, intended outcomes; curriculum; provision of facilities/equipment; financial resources including fees, sponsorship, entrepreneurial ventures, community use of facilities and gifts; pupil inputs and staff inputs involving staff profile, position profile, recruiting, selecting and employing.
Structures	Organisational structure; patterns of authority; school council (present or absent, advisory or decision making, structure/representation, how selected); school day, week and year and student grouping.
Processes	Establishment of priorities; determination of policies; strategic planning; budgeting; financial management for utilities, facilities, equipment/resources, non-teaching salaries, professional development and contingencies; management of facilities, equipment and teaching resources, curriculum organisation; progression of students, teaching/learning processes; assessment of student outcomes; staff management involving, role/responsibilities, deployment, conditions, expectations, appraisal, professional development, promotion, sanction, industrial relations, conflict management and termination; evaluation, feedback and improvement; school expansion, change of direction or closure.
Relation with Environment	Exercising accountability involving reporting student achievement, school effectiveness and efficiency; relating to proprietors, parent body, local community, other government agencies, government and its agencies and wider community; marketing and promotion.

It was asserted that a totally self managing or a totally externally controlled school was unlikely to exist, but rather, there would be movement towards either end of the continuum for each of the dimensions, as illustrated in Table 2.8 below, (Sharpe 1993b,

p.2). Independent schools would more likely be further to the Total Self Management end of the continuum than public schools.

Table 2.8
Stands Within the Self-Management Continuum (Sharpe, 1993)



The following tables illustrate Sharpe's interpretation of changes in self management in Australian public schools since 1973 for the various dimensions. Table 2.9 refers to inputs, Table 2.10 refers to structures, Table 2.11 refers to processes and Table 2.12 refers to relations with the environment.

Table 2.9
Direction of Change in School Control Over Inputs (1973-1993)

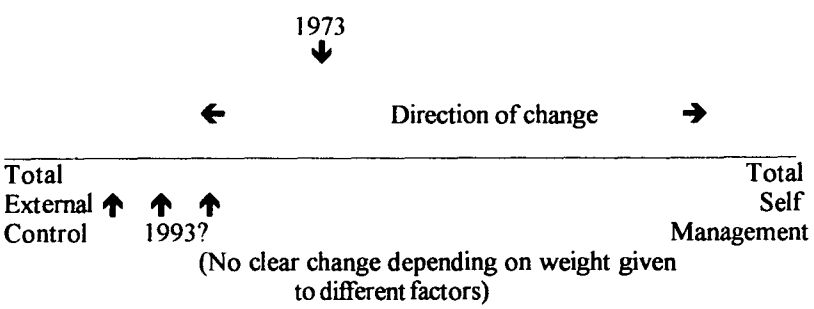
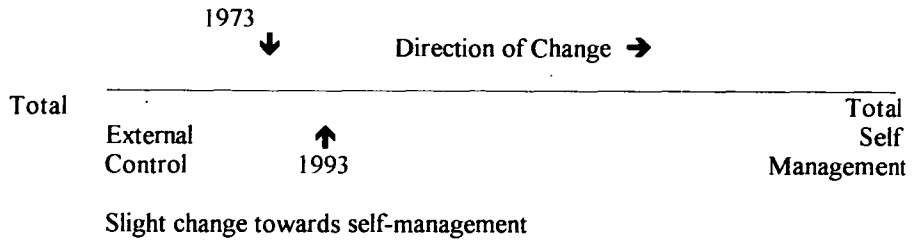


Table 2.10
Directions of Change in School Control Over Structures (1973-1993)



Slight change towards self-management

Table 2.11
Direction of Change in School Control over Processes (1973-1993)

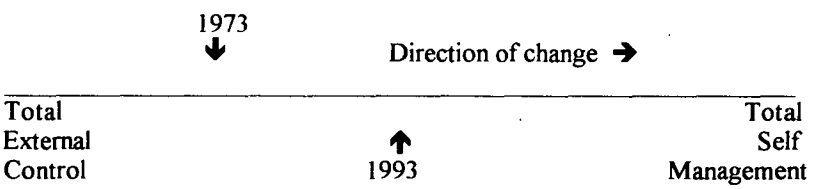
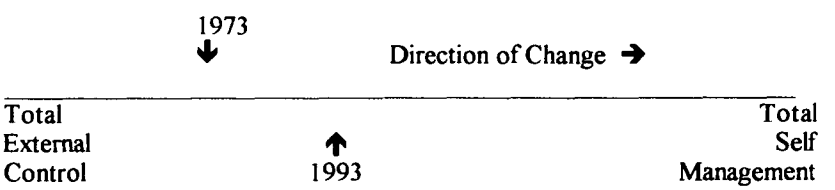


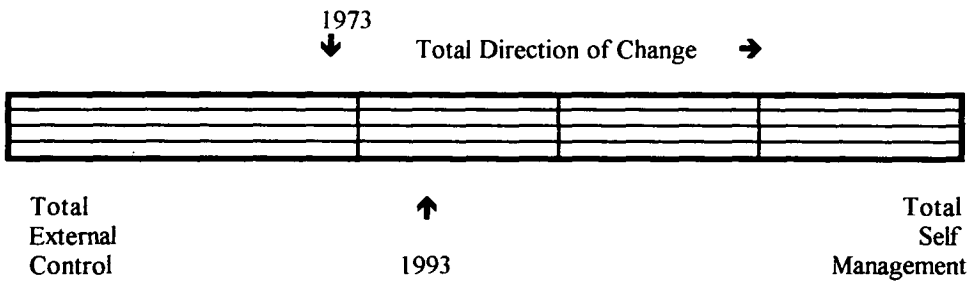
Table 2.12
Direction of Change in Relations with the Environment (1973- 1993)



Sharpe (1993) contended that there had been a significant trend to school based management of processes, a smaller but significant shift for school environment and structures. He admitted that the shift for inputs was difficult to establish. The apparent increase in influence/control by governments, systems and curriculum authorities over

policies, culture , curriculum and assessment may modify or even counteract the benefits schools are sensing from greater freedom in other aspects of management. The cumulative movement is illustrated in Table 2.13, although it is not clear how these movements were measured or aggregated. Since Sharpe had been the Director General of the New South Wales Department of Education they stand as interesting and informed opinions.

Table 2.13
Direction of Change in Total Level of School Self-Management (1973-1993)



2.7 Tasmanian Context

Over the past fifteen years, in line with national and international restructuring movements, successive Tasmanian Governments, both Labor and Liberal, have had an agenda of 'generating efficiencies and greater effectiveness' (Macpherson 1992, p. 2). This illustrated Hughes' point that the restructuring agenda was independent of political parties. In fact the most dramatic cuts in the education budget, in Tasmania, came during the term of the Labor Government elected in 1990. The implication here was that restructuring was economic rationalism.

The Cresap Report (1990) commissioned by the then Labor Minister of Education, Mr Peter Patmore, recommended cuts of approximately 10%. It was one of the more extreme examples of budget cuts in Australia. Over $18 million was to be saved, which resulted in 552 teachers and 426 non-teaching staff being made redundant. This translated to a 10% reduction of staff in schools with a subsequent rise in student: teacher ratios of between 1 and 2. The size of the 'centre' was reduced, with many consultant positions being made redundant.

2.7.1 Staffing

Staffing of Tasmanian Schools has continued to be a contentious issue since the Cresap report. Rural schools in relatively isolated areas of Tasmania are classed as 'non-preferred' (DEA, 1994b). Teachers in Tasmania tend to 'do their time' in non-preferred schools then transfer to the 'preferred schools' where they remain until they seek their next promotion. As a means of gaining promotion teachers often obtain their first promoted position in non-preferred schools. These positions are easier to win than in preferred schools. After being in that position for a few years teachers then apply for a similar position in preferred schools. Thus preferred schools have acquired a more experienced base of teachers and senior staff.

The DEA has recognised the problem of staffing non-preferred rural schools. The recent Transfer Policy (1994a: 1994b) listed as one aim:

> to ensure that students in less favoured schools are not disadvantaged and that teachers in these schools are given the opportunity to teach in more favoured schools (p. 2).

The DEA has always had the legal authority to transfer any teacher to any school at any time but it has seldom exercised this right. The Tranfer Policy (1994a) stated that assignments to isolated and/or difficult to staff schools would be for a period of three years and that, other assignments would be for five years. During the initial implementation of this policy, teachers most available for transfer were those who had more than fifteen years continuous service in schools and those that had never taught in difficult to staff or non-preferred locations (DEA 1994b, p. 6). It is fair to say that the policy was greeted with some temporary hostility. The hostility related to issues broader than simple careerism.

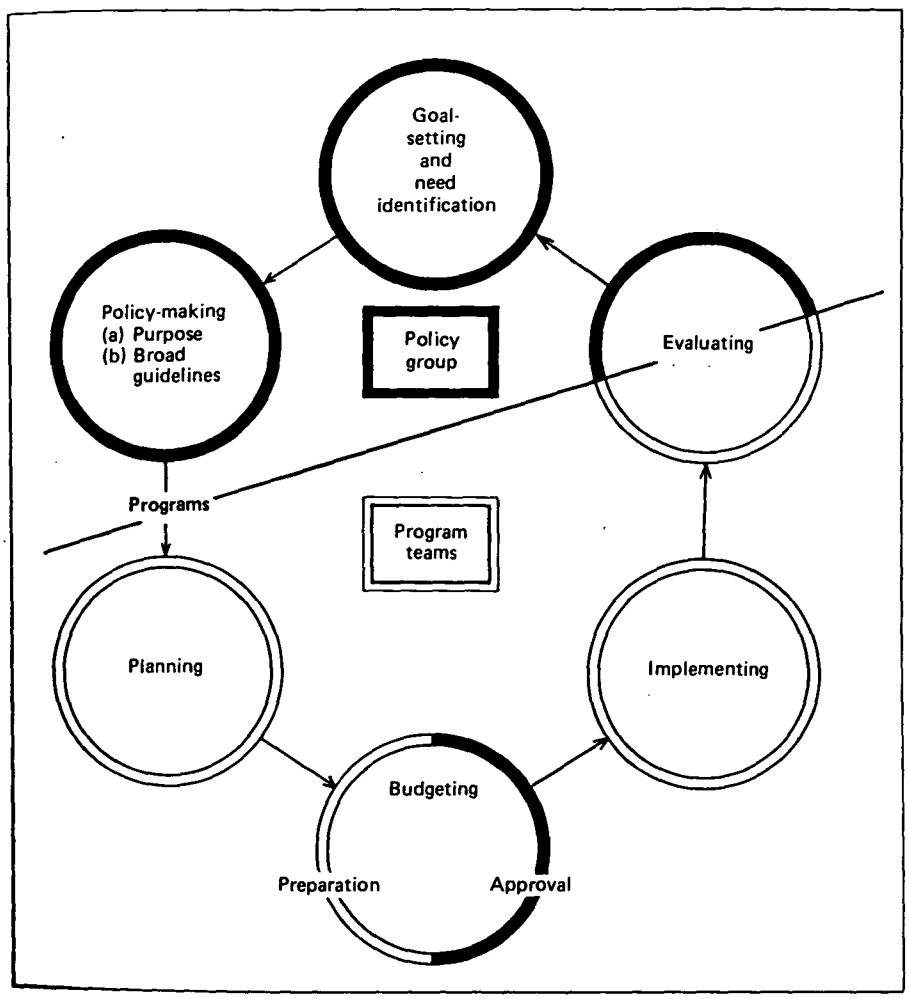
According to Dinham (1995, p.4), Australia's teaching population is ageing with the average age being in excess of 44 and the average age increasing at the rate of ten months per year. He predicted than more than half of the current teachers will have resigned within ten years. He also predicted a teacher shortage over the next ten years as currently

school population of 600 students with classes from kindergarten to grade ten, and in the 1990's, some year eleven students. Rosebery depended almost entirely on the mining operations of the Electrolytic Zinc Company. Being isolated, the school was generally staffed by young inexperienced staff taking up their first teaching appointment. Senior staff were also usually in their first school in their promoted position. There was a high turnover of staff.

The school's Collaborative School Management Cycle and the policy making powers of its school council are well documented in the literature and were promoted by the DEA as exemplars for other Tasmanian schools to adopt. During 1991 Spinks became Superintendent, School Self Management for the DEA, and was responsible for the development of a central framework for school self management. He conducted training programs for principals, teachers and parents throughout the state.

During the late 1980's Caldwell and Spinks acted as consultants and keynote speakers for the DEA at seminars held throughout the state. Typical of these was a seminar titled *School Self Management* (1989) held for principals on the North West Coast of Tasmania. Caldwell was the keynote speaker. Similar seminars were held throughout the state. It was significant to note that the original planning cycle presented at the seminar, illustrated in Table 2.14. below, was later found in chapter three of the Self Managing School titled 'Effectiveness through Collaborative School Management'.

Table 2.14
The Collaborative School Management Cycle (Caldwell and Spinks 1989)

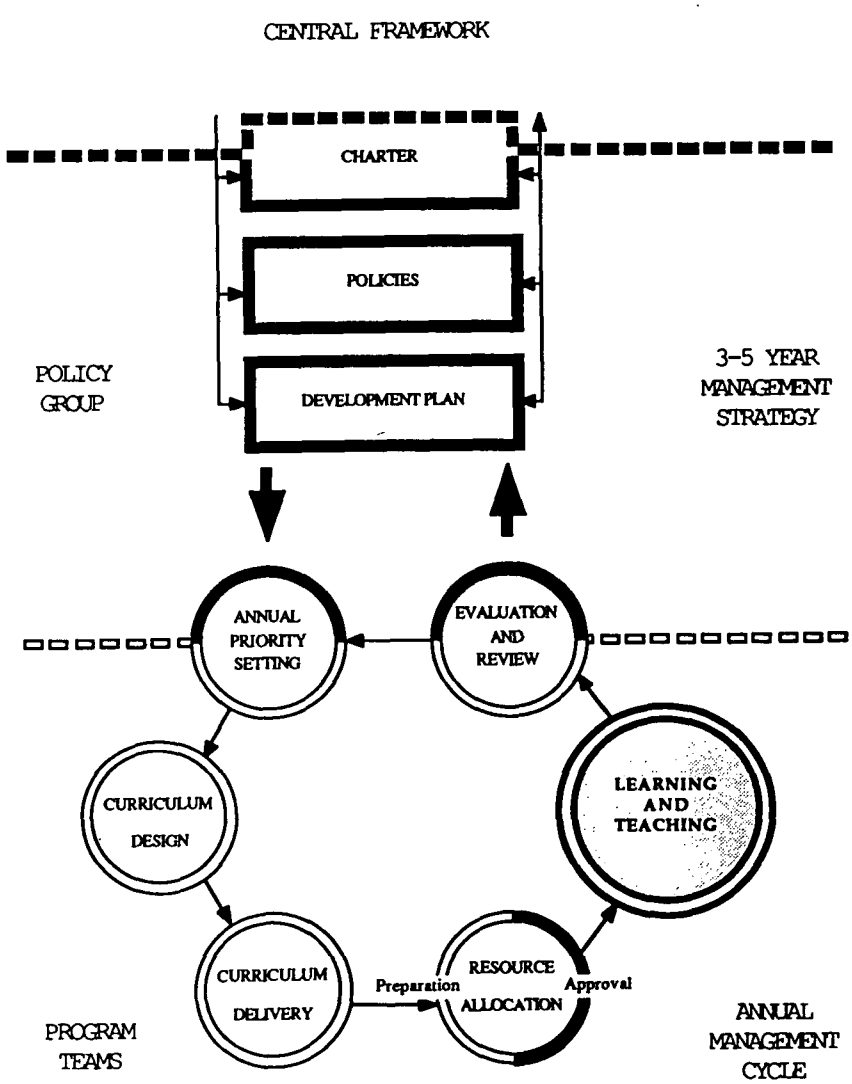


Clearly the meaning of 'effectiveness' in this model had its origins in the effectiveness literature of the early 1980s, as explained previously, although it is a more complex model than the five, six or seven factor models seen in the literature from North America.

The refined cycle in *Leading The Self Managing School*, available as Table 2.15 below, was significantly different from the first. A Central Framework and a Charter had been

added. The more complex cycle was in line with the more interactive Australian effectiveness models of the late 1980's. This model also represented the notion of culture as being highly significant. It acknowledged that a culture which promoted collegiality and cooperation between all stakeholders was a pre-condition of achieving greater effectiveness. Mulford (1994) and Hargreaves (1994), however, had cautioned that contrived collegiality or quick fixes would not work; effective cooperative processes and interactive professionalism was required.

Table 2.15
Revised Collaborative School Management Cycle (Caldwell and Spinks 1992)



2.7.3 Accountability

A latent legitimacy crisis was predicted by Macpherson (1992, p. 25; 1993, p.156) because of the accountability vacuum in self managing schools. He argued that there were conflicting views with regard to accountability and the client view was being somewhat disregarded. Macpherson's prediction supported Caldwell's (1991, p. 236) claims that the absence of goals, priorities and frameworks for accountability in the early 1990's were concerns for self managing schools in Tasmania.

The technical viewpoint concerning accountability was that schools would improve if learning and leadership practices based on scientifically validated knowledge were made available to schools. The professional viewpoint was that schools would improve if greater opportunity was given to teachers and their immediate leaders to develop skills, exercise judgement and have greater control over their work (Macpherson 1995, p. 9). Macpherson (1992), however, considered this led to 'provider capture' and to the marginalising of questions of efficiency, responsibilities and client's prior rights. Guidelines coming from teacher unions, (eg. Billing, 1990) lent strong support to Macpherson's concern.

A fundamentally different method of accountability, the client viewpoint, was that educators account directly to parents, students and other users of the service. This form of accountability favoured political and market methods. While this third approach was

being heavily promoted in the United Kingdom, Macpherson advocated school leaders using all three methods, technical, professional and client, and looking for touchstone, rather than considering these perspectives mutually exclusive.

Tasmania had both technical and professional forms of accountability but little that catered to the client perspective by the late 1980's. The Labor Government's initiative requiring schools and colleges to establish a council (DEA, 1991c, p.7) was to make schools more accountable to the local community. However, this led to role conflict because of dual accountabilities of the school council and principal, to both community and minister (Macpherson 1995 p. 2). Support for this initiative waned, with the incoming Liberal Government (1992) not mandating school councils, although supportive of them. Instead they produced policy guidelines.

The *Accountability Policy* (DEA, 1993) was a directive to schools and colleges to establish an accountability cycle. Aims within the DEA's strategic plan, description of policies and reporting outcomes of activities, along with a subsequent revision of their plans, were to be collated into each school's report. This was to be made available to the public and senior officers of the department. Accountability procedures were encouraged in the *Local School Leadership and Management* policy (DEA, 1993) to be included in each school's annual planning cycle. Outcomes of teaching, learning and resource allocation were to be made available to each school community and district office. The resultant

report was to be presented to the appropriate school council and made available to the wider community. This approach, however, kept parents structurally marginalised.

The descriptive accountability procedures of the early 1990's were paper rich, usually generated by principals and sections of the teaching staff. The client perspective in this potentially 'provider captured' form of accountability was largely ignored. In sharp contrast parents valued (Tasmanian Education Council (TEC), 1993) information on curriculum content, expected learning outcomes, the development of their children both academically and socially and they wanted an opportunity to have their say about the nature of the schools that their children attended.

In summary, the parent perspective had been ignored resulting in a lack of coherence between between accountability procedures. This resulted in a lack of legitimacy in the system as a whole. Principals and senior officers of the DEA had the major accountability roles, which excluded to various degrees classroom teachers and consumer interests, of which parents are a significant group. The next section examines some attempts at allowing parents to be a legitimate part of the accountability process.

2.8 Case Studies - Accountability

The literature search revealed little research into accountability from parents' perspectives with regard to summative evaluation. Most research concentrated on parents' views of

what they would prefer to happen in schools but little into their perceptions of what was actually happening in schools. Further, most studies sought information valued by school leaders and policy makers when forming and implementing policies. Such an approach could, at best, be regarded as guiding or formative systemic accountability. Obtaining perceptions of the actual enactment of policies was assumed to be one way of allowing for client accountability, helping to pre-empt the development of legitimacy crises. This section will review some case studies and other research that have considered client viewpoints in the accountability process. The context will be briefly explained, with emphasis given to parent accountability procedures.

2.8.1 Edmonton Public School District - Alberta Canada

Edmonton School District introduced school based management to all schools in the early 1980's. It started as school-based budgeting but broadened to involve most of the characteristics of Caldwell's 'Self Managing School'. The first mechanism was the testing of students in grade 3, 6 and 9 in language arts, mathematics, science and social science with year 12 students taking the Alberton Education Examinations. A panel of experts defined the benchmark, a target considered possible for all students, with 80% mastery set as the standard.

Second, all students, teachers, principals, district staff and a representative sample of parents completed an opinion survey each year. Comparative data from surveys have

been reported since 1981 and test results since 1987. School by school comparisons were avoided by publishing aggregated data for the district although schools received a detailed analysis of their data. The parent survey involved completing questionnaires which had statements relating to courses and programs, organisation, satisfaction with staff, services and facilities and communications (Smilanich 1991, p. 12). Responses were limited to agree/disagree statements. Content categories varied for other stakeholders but there was considerable overlap.

Third, student information was recorded on retention rates, attendance, results from year 12 examinations and special awards. Staff information concerning inservice training and external professional development activities was collected. Miscellaneous information about the use of school facilities, maintenance requirements, capital works projects and budget allocations was also collected.

Caldwell (1992, p. 152) made three observations about the Edmonton approach to accountability:

1. the system established a method of evaluation that went well beyond the reliance on student testing. The survey instruments evolved to be user friendly and cheap to administer;
2. large numbers of personnel were not required negating the need for many senior departmental staff to be involved in paper heavy site evaluations; and

3. the district reported steady gains over time with the eighties being one of remarkable stability.

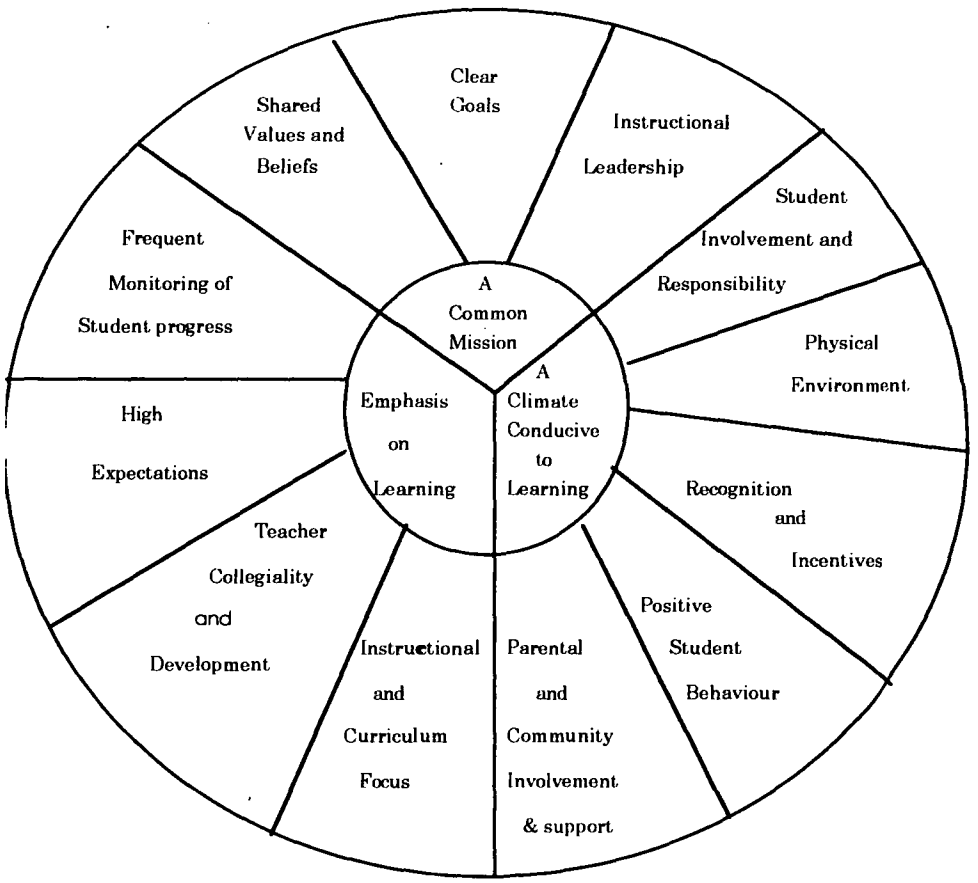
The summary data (Smilanich 1991) which gave insights into the methodology supports Caldwell's judgements.

2.8.2. The Halton Board of Education Ontario Canada

The Halton Board of Education was responsible for 17 secondary schools and 65 elementary schools. They set up an Effective Schools Task Force using a model of effective school illustrated in Table 2.16 below.

They collected accountability data in a somewhat similar manner to the Edmonton Board. It was collected using standardised tests in language arts, literacy, mathematics, science and problem solving. Surveys were used to assess community satisfaction, teacher and pupil satisfaction, as well as information relating to student time on task, homework and student self-concept. Data were also collected on attendance, dropout rates, discipline referrals and vandalism. The information was used for accountability and to develop school and district 'growth plans' (Stoll and Fink 1988; 1990; 1991; 1992; 1994; Stoll 1991a; 1991b; 1993).

Table 2.16
School Effectiveness Model - Stoll and Fink



The survey data from teachers, parents and students were collected using both preferred and actual dimensions entitled 'Importance to This School' and 'Reflects this School', in each case using a five-point Likert scale. Statements were grouped according to the content categories listed in the outer circle of Stoll and Finks' effectiveness model. Results were presented as illustrated in Table 2.17.

Table 2.17
Halton Elementary Schools Effective Schools -Parent Questionnaire (Stoll 1991a)
Examples of Results

Statement	% A = Agree B= Important	% Uncertain Less Important	% Disagree Not Important
The staff is committed to the school's mission.	82 89	10 9	7 2
People in this school work together as a team.	79 98	13 2	8 1
The community participates in school events.	87 90	9 9	2 1

Key: A= This School (The Reality) B= The Ideal Situation (Importance)

Although the methodology appears to have generated useful information, other statistical tests, for example, factor analysis, may have provided a better understanding of the data and hence the client perspective.

2.8.3 Parents and School Effectiveness in Scotland

McGlynn *et al.* (1993, p. 2) suggested that a valuable source of feedback to schools was from pupils and parents but that parents did not offer opinions and information readily and that systematic evaluation was not common practice. They developed a series of questionnaires designed to survey students of various ages, parents and teachers quickly. Again the information was to be used in conjunction with data on examination performances and qualitative data for accountability and planning for school improvement.

The parent questionnaire was based on what Scottish parents considered to be priorities for their child summarised as:

> Is my child enjoying school, happy, safe, well behaved and learning good behaviour, able to get on with other pupils, being treated fairly by teachers, being given the fullest opportunities to learn, being helped to make the best choices?

A part of the questionnaire, illustrated in Table 2.18 below, asked for the 'actual response' using a four-point Likert scale.

Reports were made to individual school leaders with comparative data available on request. Only the school requesting the information was identified in the report. Leaders of schools who took part in the study found the information useful for both accountability and school improvement purposes. MacBeath (1993, p. 5) found that schools were increasingly taking up this form of research which has 'offered insights far exceeding the initial expectations of the schools'.

Issues that could be addressed in the short term were playgrounds, buildings and in particular, student toilets. Longer term issues which became apparent were discipline, communication, teacher-pupil relationships, staff development and leadership by the head teacher. MacBeath and McGlynn (1993, p.12) commented:

Table 2.18
Parent Perceptions (McGlynn and MacBeath 1993)

	strongly agree	agree	disagree	strongly disagree
I feel I can go up to the school any time because I get such a nice welcome.				
If parents complain teachers just close ranks on us.				
I really feel they know my child as an individual.				
I am confident that if there's a problem they'll let me know immediately.				
I know we can just pick up the phone and get advice or help.				
Sometimes there's too much homework and at other times very little or none.				

The attitudinal data then serves to illuminate and explain some of the bald statistics which cannot themselves tell the whole story. Even then the indicators should be seen not just as barometers but as tin openers. That is, while they point to significant concerns they do not give definitive measures of school's quality. Seen as tin opener, indicators open up aspects of school life that can be exposed to the sunlight, and out in the open can encourage a positive and informed debate.

2.8.4 Parent Attitude Toward School Effectiveness (PASTE) - Connecticut

This study placed greater emphasis on statistical analysis, going beyond percentage responses. (The statistical analysis used will be examined in Chapter Three.) The study

was based on the belief that the partnership between teachers and parents was important. It was also considered that the information collected from PASTE was just one part of the needs assessment process and should be used with other accountability procedures (Gable *et al.*, 1986).

The instrument used a five-point Likert scale to measure perceptions of the actual situation to do with: school community relationships, school mission, expectations, environment, instructional leadership and monitoring of student progress. Results indicated that parents who visited the school the most frequently had a more positive perception of the school. Parents with higher educational attainment also had a more positive perception of the school and lone parent's were not as positive as parents in two-parent families.

2.8.5 Colorado Department of Education

The Colorado Department of Education produced a series of handbooks that schools could use to determine their school climate (Frazier 1986a; 1986b; 1986c; 1986d; 1986e and 1986f). They were used with students, teachers, counsellors, administrators, parents and the wider community. The instruments were designed around eight areas of effectiveness: curriculum congruence, a positive climate for learning, instructional effectiveness, organisation and management of the instructional setting, parent community

involvement, professional growth and development, school improvement processes and accountability and the leadership of the principal.

All questionnaires assessed the actual situation and preferred situation, using a four-point Likert scale. Differences between the preferred and actual situation were then examined as a basis for developing school improvement plans indicating that formative evaluation had occurred.

2.8.6 Effective Schools: Schools that Make a Difference.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) conducted a nationwide project to determine what the Australian community thought about effective schools. A booklet entitled *Effective Schools that Make a Difference* (McGaw 1991), along with an associated video tape, was circulated to schools inviting participation. The booklet had a questionnaire stapled to it that was to be filled out and returned to ACER. There were five steps in the research project:

1. Ministers of Education commissioned the ACER to prepare the booklet and associated video to assist school discussions.

2. From August 1991 schools were invited to hold meetings, to discuss the material, in whatever form they deemed desirable.

3. Schools were invited to respond using the tear out response form by October 1991.

4. ACER then collated and published a national report of findings, supplemented by national and international research.

5. Over a period of two to three years based on their own discussions in Stage two and the ACER report, schools were encouraged to undertake school improvement programs funded by the Commonwealth Government.

The circular methodology used can be criticised. The booklet was based on school effectiveness literature. Using it as a discussion starter prior to asking respondents to fill out a questionnaire on what they think makes an effective school, must have led to considerable levels of uncontrolled bias. The approach could be regarded as a formative accountability process, particularly if the option in point five was taken up, or as a public relations exercise.

It was important research, however, as it tended to confirm the importance that the Australian community gave to various factors of effectiveness. No theme could be disentangled as being most or least indicating an inter-related web of factors. Responses were placed in fifteen categories, which could be explained in eleven themes (Banks, 1993, p. 21). Teachers and curriculum were perceived as being central to effectiveness, then

ethos, school resources, equity or fair treatment in the schooling experience, parents, a shared vision, shared responsibility for the provision of good schooling, and the outcomes of schooling.

Part of Townsend's (1994, p. 73) study in Victoria, conducted simultaneously in 1991-92, asked parents to rank various effective school elements. The responses suggested four overall categories: school staff, total school environment, instructional procedures and organisational procedures of the school and school system. Combined, the work of Townsend and McGaw *et al.* (1993) point to what Australian parents considered at the time to be the most important components of effective schools. The methodological limitations involved, however, do not permit definitive theory to be drawn.

2.8.7 Future Directions Study 1992-2000

Funded federally by The Good Schools program, two Tasmanian schools, Sheffield District High School (principal Jim Spinks) and Ulverstone High School (principal Mike Brakey) were involved in a Future Directions Study. It aimed to provide accurate and up to date information for school decision making about the future.

Information was obtained from parent, teachers, students, ex-students, employers and community leaders using a three round Delphi, as well as search conferences and interviews allowing for triangulation to check reliability and validity. The following

recommendations were made regarding the future directions of Ulverstone High School (Auer 1992, p. 11):

1. An Implementation Committee be set up quickly to oversee the educational and associated developments which this study identified.

2. The Implementation Committee is to consist of representatives of all major stakeholder groups identified in this study and the study consultant.

3. Ulverstone High School encourages its members of staff to regularly be involved in professional development activities.

4. The school should place immediate emphasis upon attaining high levels of literacy and numeracy.

5. The appropriate school group examine the school curriculum in some detail and endeavour to provide a broad and varied curriculum which includes activities such as excursions, camps and club activities.

6. A relevant program of work experience be guaranteed for all students in year 10 if it is at all possible within the constraints of available resources.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the development of 'the machinery' referred to in chapter one, the selection of the sample, the collation and analysis of data and presentation of the results. It is an example of field research and was guided by Kerlinger's (1986, p. 375) comment:

> In designing research it is important not to underestimate the large amounts of time, energy, and skill necessary for the completion of most field studies. The field researcher needs to be salesman, administrator, and entrepreneur, as well as investigator.

One of the purposes of this chapter is to examine the appropriateness of a quantitative approach using surveying techniques to collect data. Kerlinger (1986, p. 387) argued that a remarkably accurate portrait of the community could be obtained using survey research. He also noted that the limited depth of the information obtained by surveys was one of its disadvantages. One of the main focuses, however, was to pick up 'early weak signals' coming from the parent community. This research may indicate areas where more in-depth investigation is required.

In the first section below the political context, and how political support was obtained, are explained. This is followed by a rather long and involved account of the design and development, including the statistical analysis, of the instrument until it had political support and could be considered reliable and valid. How the statewide survey was conducted is then explained, including the supporting statistical analysis, which involved factor analysis.

An iterative methodology was used for the development of the survey instrument. The process began with a qualitative phase of discussions with stakeholders to relate local theories of school effectiveness to the international literature. This approach was informed by the epistemology of Evers and Lakomski (1991). This meant that the early network of ideas used as the conceptual frame of reference were regarded as a provisional assembly, and were evaluated regularly as components were added or adjusted in a holistic way (Macpherson, 1991 p. 22). The components were added and adjusted guided by Crowther and Gibson's (1990, p.46) criteria of validity for naturalistic research.

As indicated in Table 3.1, the development of the instrument was informed by the process of gaining political support, as well as by the content categories, scales, instructions and statements found in the literature. This growing 'network of ideas' concerned with school effectiveness was discussed with an external advisory body, as well as with parents, school councillors, principals and teachers (see Table 3.2). The

external advisory body included published authors on school effectiveness, research design and methodology in educational administration, as well as an internationally recognised expert in school climate research and another PhD student who used a somewhat similar methodology.

The parent group was varied but not strictly random, comprising people who could be considered representative of parents. The School Councillors involved were members of Leesville High and Leesville Primary school who were prepared to make themselves available to discuss the research.

Table 3.1
Components Considered in the Development of the Questionnaire

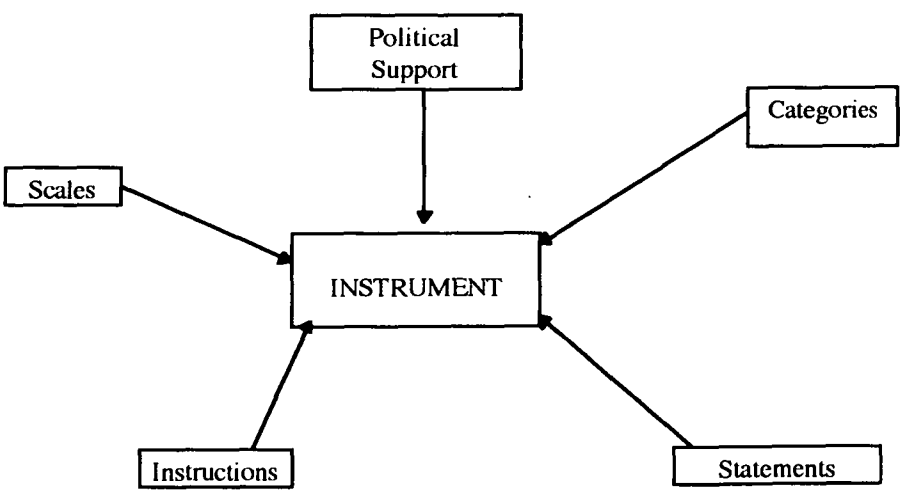
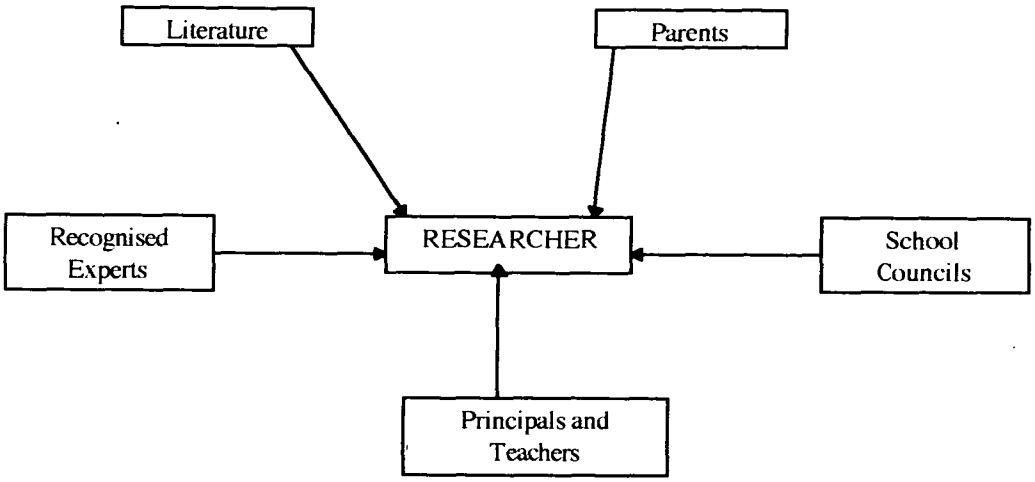


Table 3.2
Groups Involved in the Development of the Questionnaire



3.1 Political Context

According to the then president of the State Schools Parents and Friends Association of Tasmania (SSPFA) (Williams 1992), there had never been a survey conducted on a state-wide basis that tried to ascertain parents' perceptions of what is actually happening in Tasmanian Schools. He gave personal support to the project but cautioned that schools may find such a survey threatening and suggested that political support for the project in each school community and in each education interest group at state level would be vital.

Political support was then obtained from all relevant interest groups. The SSPFA formally decided to support the project. The Department of Education and the Arts (DEA) gave approval for the research but it was left up to individual school communities to decide if they wished to participate (Appendix A).

3.2 Assembling the Survey Instrument (Trial)

Schools in the Melville Swamp Cluster were invited to take part in the research. The Cluster consists of Leesville High School, Leesville Primary School, Welcome Primary, Snake Primary, Bird Primary and Crayfish Primary. Their characteristics at the time of the research are now described.

Leesville High School was a medium sized Tasmanian High School, catering for approximately 500 students from years seven to ten and approximately 120 students in years eleven and twelve. It conducted classes for years eleven and twelve, most other high schools catering for years seven to ten students.

All primary schools in the Melville Swamp Cluster catered for students from kindergarten to grade six. Leesville Primary School was a large Tasmanian primary school of about 500 students. Snake Gully Primary and Bird Primary Schools were medium sized Tasmanian primary schools of about 180 children. Crayfish Primary and Welcome Primary were small Tasmanian schools of about 50 students.

At the time of the research, all schools in the cluster had some form of school council. Primary schools had equal representation from parents and teachers, the average size

being about ten. Leesville High School's council had equal representation for parents and teachers as well as three student members.

The proposed research was outlined to the chairperson of the primary principals' group. The chairperson extended an invitation to the researcher to make an informal presentation to a meeting of the primary principals. The group gave guarded support but wanted to be kept informed of developments. The principal of Leesville Primary School, however, gave strong support to the project.

Several days after the meeting the principal of Leesville Primary invited the researcher to address his school's school council. It transpired that they had been thinking of surveying the parents of the school. They were prepared to allow the researcher to trial the instrument provided they could use the information for their own purposes (Appendix B). This resulted in some pressure as they wanted feedback before the instrument was refined and shown to be valid and reliable. They also wanted all parents to have the opportunity to 'have a say' about the school. This meant that the whole parent population was to be surveyed. This was used to advantage by the researcher as it gave access to a large number of respondents on a number of occasions.

The principal of Leesville High School then gave strong support to the project and extended an invitation to the researcher to address the school council. Leesville High Council also gave strong support, provided they had access to the information and were

allowed to have some input to its development (Appendix C). They also wanted the whole parent population to have an opportunity to complete the survey instrument. This demand clearly had local origins.

In summary, although much time was taken up gaining political support, it was found to be both useful and politically essential. Parents were not only going to give their views on what ought to be happening in schools, but wanted the opportunity for all to declare and compare it to what they perceived was actually happening in their school.

The researcher was also a senior staff member and councillor of Leesville High which led to forms of role conflicts predicted by Hamilton (1977). He put forward the following questions that had to be addressed by researchers (p.234):

1. How neutral should the researcher try to be?
2. How are failures reported without unduly damaging professional reputations?
3. How is authenticity balanced against the need to maintain privacy through the process of rendering settings and persons anonymous?
4. Who 'owns' the data?

These questions became highly pertinent. The researcher was asked for information before reliability and validity were established and both councils wanted to compare between-school information to help with interpretation. These dilemmas were resolved by regularly meeting with principals and councils to explain the development of the instrument and to describe the status of the data obtained. The research had, as Stufflebeam (1985, p. 138) argued it should, a 'political purpose' and had 'some influence on social affairs'.

Specifically the first question was addressed by declaring all sources of information to principals and councillors and circulating supporting literature used for presentations. The criticisms of the effectiveness literature were raised and discussed. To address question two, permission from both Leesville councils and in particular principals was obtained before any between-school comparisons were made. Principals, having given strong support for the project initially, considered this a necessary step to help determine the usefulness of the data obtained. They predicted that there would be differences.

To address question three, data from interviews were only used to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument and were not made public. This condition was declared to the interviewees before the interviews took place. All other responses were coded and rendered untraceable. Individual schools requesting further information were given aggregated data that did not allow direct between school-comparisons to be made.

Finally to address question four, data was made available to school principals once they had demonstrably acceptable levels of reliability and validity.

3.3 Content Categories

In the first instance, categories were developed from Mulford's (1987) benchmark summaries of school effectiveness literature. Table 3.3 indicates the representative overseas studies he used and Table 3.4 refers to representative Australian Studies he surveyed. They were used in conjunction with Gable *et al.* (1986, p. 26) whose content categories are shown in Table 3.5 Their research focused on the actual response without asking for the preferred response. There was enough coherence between the categories, as illustrated in Table 3.6, to proceed.

In line with the iterative approach taken, these categories were considered at best contestable beliefs and were subjected to the scrutiny of the various stakeholders, except the trial parents, until touchstone was achieved. Trial parents were excluded from this phase or else the usefulness of their responses would have been questionable.

Table 3.3
Representative Overseas Studies (Mulford 1987)
("+" considered important by the author)

Factors	Renihan & Renihan 1984	Murphy & Hallinger 1984	Austin 1984	Rutter 1979	Edmonds 1981	Duckett 1980	Brookover & Lezotte 1979-80
Sense of Mission	+	+	+	+		+	
Great Expectations	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Academic Focus	+	+	+			+	+
Feedback on Academic Performance	+	+			+		+
Positive Motivational Strategies	+	+	+	+			
Conscious Attention to (a safe, ordered community) Climate	+	+		+	+	+	
Administrative Leadership	+	+	+		+	+	+
Other Teacher Responsibility	+		+				+
Parental Involvement	+					+	+
System Support	+					+	

These categories were discussed with the external advisory panel, principals, teachers and councils. Although they were accepted in general, there was considerable discussion. Interplay between the groups and the researcher took place until touchstone was eventually achieved using Australian metaphors, explained below. Although the development of statements, scales and instructions was happening concurrently, agreement on content categories had to be achieved first.

Table 3.4
Representative Australian Studies (Mulford 1987)
("+" considered important by the author)

Factors	Mellor & Chapman 1984	Caldwell & Misko 1984	Hyde & Werner 1984
Sense of Mission	+	+	+
Great Expectations	+	+	
Academic Focus			+
Feedback on Academic Performance			+
Positive Motivational Strategies	+	+	
Conscious Attention to (a safe, ordered community) Climate	+	+	+
Administrative Leadership	+	+	+
Other Teacher Responsibility	+	+	+
Parental Involvement	+	+	
System Support	+	+	+

The content categories and meanings generated by this iterative process are summarized in Table 3.6. Clear School Mission was changed to Sense of Mission, in line with Mulford's category. Principals, and to a lesser extent, school councillors, considered Clear School Mission was too authoritarian and that a Sense of Mission was more appropriate.

Table 3.5
Content Categories (Gable *et al.* 1986)

Content Category	Description
School and Community Relationships	Parents understand and support the basic mission of the school and are made to feel they have an important role in achieving this mission. -opportunities -communication
Clear School Mission	Clearly articulated mission, through which the staff shares an understanding of and commitment to, instructional goals and priorities. School policies demonstrate push for student achievement.
High Expectations	Staff believes and demonstrates that students can attain mastery of basic skills and that they have the capability to help students achieve such mastery.
Safe and Orderly Environment	Orderly, purposeful atmosphere, yet not oppressive. An atmosphere free from threat of physical harm. Includes concerns about discipline, vandalism, student and staff morale, and pupil sense of ownership and pride.
Instructional Leadership	The principal effectively communicates the mission of the school to staff, students, and parents. The principal applies characteristics of instructional effectiveness in the management of the instructional program.
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Feedback about student academic progress is obtained frequently. Multiple assessment methods are utilised and results of testing are used to improve individual student performance and the instructional program.

Table 3.6
Comparison of Content Categories

Mulford's Categories	Gable *et al.'s* Categories
Sense of Mission	Clear School Mission
Great Expectations	High Expectations
Feedback on Academic Performance	Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress
Conscious Attention to Climate (a positive ordered community)	Safe and Orderly Environment
Administrative Leadership	Instructional Leadership
Parental Involvement	School Community Relationships

The term Instructional Leadership met with some hostility from principals. They wanted the category removed. They considered it 'unfairly restrictive'. Mulford's term Administrative Leadership, although not fully acceptable, was considered slightly better. They were eventually adamant the term had to be Educational Leadership.

High Expectations was accepted providing it was related to student ability. Frequent monitoring of student progress was initially considered by all groups as regressive since the focus was too narrow. Safe and Orderly Environment was accepted without argument. School Community Relations was accepted by all groups with only minor modification. The agreed content categories are defined in Table 3.7.

Table 3.7
Accepted Content Categories

CONTENT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
Sense of Mission	There is commitment and loyalty by the school community to a set of values and goals. The values and goals need to be developed by high involvement from all sections of the school community (principal, staff, students, parents and wider school catchment.)
High Expectations	There is an expectation by principal, staff and students that all students are able to do well. There is recognition of achievement with an emphasis on achievement and success related to student ability.
Safe and Orderly Environment	There is an orderly and purposeful atmosphere where students feel free from threat of harm. There is a behaviour code, which is adhered to, which includes a respect by all of their rights, and others' rights and property.
Educational Leadership	The principal and senior staff are responsible, supportive and involved with what is going on in the classrooms and are prepared to facilitate teacher development and parent involvement.
Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress	Feedback about students' progress is given frequently. Many different forms of assessment should be used, taking into account student differences. There is clear, understandable co-ordination of evaluation activities to enhance student progress.
School Community Relationships	Parents feel that they have an opportunity to input into the overall planning of the school. There is effective communication between parents, principal, senior staff and staff.

3.4 Scales

Scales of items were generated in each of these six content categories. The scales were based on the work of Fisher and Fraser (1990), Fraser (1990) and Stoll and Fink (1988). They all used five-point Likert Scales to measure the actual and preferred situations. Fisher and Fraser (1990) used separate instruments to measure the actual and the preferred response. Stoll and Fink(1988) used a similar idea, but their *Elementary (K-8) Parents Questionnaire* had two scales, entitled 'Reflects This School' and 'Importance to This School', on the one questionnaire.

Initially the researcher decided to use two questionnaires using Stoll and Finks' headings. Opinion was divided among the external advisory panel as to whether obtaining two responses on the one form would yield useful information. Concern was expressed that the response on one scale would bias the other response; the 'halo' effect.

It was proposed that a sample of parents from each school would fill out the Reflects This School form and another would fill out the Importance to This School form. This strategy was rejected by the Mowbray Swamp Cluster principals and councils, who reiterated that they wanted all parents to have an opportunity to 'have their say' on both scales. They also felt that the scales needed to be simplified, with common instructions on both. A possible solution was to send the forms out several weeks apart to all parents but this would have been far too complex to manage and unnecessarily time consuming.

Councillors in particular considered that different instructions for the scales were too complex. A suggestion from the principal of Leesville Primary School that the headings be SHOULD APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL and DOES APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL was eventually accepted by all groups.

Fisher (1992, personal correspondence) helped resolve the impasse. He advised that since adults were completing the questionnaire, useful information would be obtained by having both scales on the one form. He cautioned, however, that the instructions and statements would have to worded with extreme care, as completion of the instrument would not be under controlled conditions.

It was finally agreed that the headings for the scales be SHOULD APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL (preferred) and DOES APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL (actual), with instructions the same for both scales and on the one form. It can be seen that the instrumentation, whatever its technical merits, was also an outcome of political processes.

3. 5 Items

The work of Stoll and Fink (1988), Gable *et al.* (1986), and Frazier (1986b) were used as an initial source of statements for items. The original collection of statements was

submitted to the external advisory panel to check for content validity. Statements that were agreed to were used to form items.

This instrument had a total of sixty items, ten for each content category, rotated in sets of six, one from each category. About half the statements were expressed in the negative so responses could be checked for responder bias (Tuckman, 1976, p. 220) or the 'halo effect' (Johnson 1987, p. 213).

The instrument was submitted to principals and councils. They considered it too long and complex. They were doubtful if many parents, could or would sustain the effort required to read sixty statements and give one hundred and twenty responses. However, they gave permission for a trial to be conducted with a small group of parents who had been asked to assist but who had taken no part in the development of the instrument to date.

Table 3.8 illustrates the layout of the initial questionnaire (Appendix D) with an example of one question from each content category shown. SA was defined as meaning strongly agree, A meaning agree, N meaning neither agree nor disagree or not sure, D meaning disagree and SD meaning strongly disagree. Respondents were asked to circle the appropriate response on each scale.

Table 3.8
Initial Questionnaire

SHOULD Apply to this School						DOES Apply to This School				
SA	A	N	D	SD	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
SA	A	N	D	SD	Little is known about the policies, academic programs and activities at this school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
SA	A	N	D	SD	Students are challenged to their capacity.	SA	A	N	D	SD
SA	A	N	D	SD	This is an unruly school.	SA	A	N	D	SD
SA	A	N	D	SD	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	SA	A	N	D	SD
SA	A	N	D	SD	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students' progress.	SA	A	N	D	SD

The external advisory panel also suggested that an optional information page at the end of the instrument might yield useful additional information by inviting parents to comment on matters not covered in the questionnaire. The information was also used to help assess the validity and usefulness of the instrument. The open ended questions were:

1. Are there areas of education that you would like to comment on that haven't been covered in the questionnaire?

2. Are there any comments you are prepared to make about the research, the school or education in general?

If you are prepared to discuss the survey and /or education in general, either in person or over the phone, I will make myself available at any time that is convenient.

3.6 Data Analysis

The responses were scored SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2 and SD = 1 for statements written in the positive form and the converse for statements written in the negative.

All forms were hand scored by the researcher on a specifically designed marking sheet (Appendix E), entered initially into a spreadsheet on Micro SoftWorks but analysed using a statistics package Statview (1992) on a Apple Macintosh computer. The resultant files were stored in several places including a locked safe for security. Photocopies were made of all comments and stored in a different place.

3.7 Reliability and Construct Validity

An analysis of both 'Should Apply to This School' and 'Does Apply to This School' scales was completed to determine the reliability and construct validity of the instrument. The analysis was used to initially eliminate unreliable statements and to reduce the number of items in the survey (originally sixty) to lessen the time required for completion.

The statistics were interpreted in a manner similar to that developed by Gable *et al.* (1986) explained in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9
Statistics Used (Gable *et al.* 1986)

Statistic	Definition	Action
Response Percentages	These represent the percentage of respondents selecting each response. Generally, responses should be spread across several of the Likert continuum points.	Statements not spread evenly need to be examined. (Bi-modal distributions may mean polarisation of opinion or poorly worded statement.)
Means and Standard Deviations	High or low means and low standard deviations could indicate that the respondents were not differentiating among various continuum points.	These items do not contribute greatly to the overall reliability and need examining.
Correlation (r) of Each Item with the Scale	This statistic indicates the extent to which the item correlates with the overall scale score	The items with the lowest correlations should be examined when the scale's alpha reliability is low.
Scale Alpha Reliability if the Item is Deleted	This statistic represents the reliability of the scale score if the item is deleted.	The items associated with higher resultant scale reliability's should be examined.
Scale Alpha Reliability	Alpha internal consistency reliability indicates to what extent the identified cluster of items tends to reflect a homogeneous concept (scale). That is, it reflects how consistent respondents were when they responded to the items identified as defining the scale	Scale alpha scores less than 0.70 should be examined. Scale alpha reliability, if individual items are removed, should be examined if score is low.

3.8 Phase One - Qualitative

As suggested by Tuckman (1978) and Kerlinger (1986) the questionnaire was piloted to ensure that instructions were understood and to help confirm or otherwise the content validity of the instrument. The group of parents (n=10) involved in the first trial were an

opportunistic sample of transport workers, tradespeople, office assistants, home managers, teachers, small business operators and professionals. They were willing to fill out the questionnaire and to be interviewed afterwards.

Interviews ranged from one to two hours and were conducted in respondents' homes. Notes were made during the interview, with summaries frequently checked with the interviewee. For the first two interviews, a structured format was used with questions asked immediately about the content categories, although this seemed to make respondents apprehensive, as predicted by Tuckman (1978 p.198) and Oppenheim (1966 p. 31). They appeared to want to have their say about what they felt to be important in the sequence and manner they preferred.

Gallop (1986, p. 44) found that it was common for parents to feel there were problems with the education system while feeling quite happy about their child's schooling. Initial discussions confirmed Gallop's finding. A general discussion seemed more appropriate at the beginning of the interview. This unstructured approach made it more difficult to focus on responses that could be used to validate the questionnaire (Kerlinger, 1986). A predetermined set of questions was asked during the interview but they were incorporated into the 'discussion' as much as possible. Put another way, a compromise was achieved between structured and unstructured interview schedules as recommended by Kerlinger (1986, p. 441). Notes were transcribed as soon as possible after the interview. In general,

only one interview per day took place. Follow up phone calls were made to clear up any misunderstandings but these were kept to a minimum.

After ten interviews it was clear that the scales and instructions were understood and only required minor modification. It was confirmed that some of the statements were difficult to understand, much as predicted by the principals and council members. Response time for completion varied from twenty minutes to one hour. Interviewed parents were quite enthusiastic about the research and thought that a lot of parents would take the time to complete it, provided that they were given the assurance that the results would be made public and considered by school leaders and policy makers.

3.9 First Trial

Phase One indicated that the instrument would yield useful information but that further testing was required to confirm or otherwise, its reliability and validity. Since trial parents considered other parents would fill out the questionnaire, principals and councillors agreed that a random sample of parents from Leesville Primary and Leesville High could be surveyed.

Leesville Primary parents were selected by taking every fourth name from the roll then checking representation from kindergarten to grade six. Leesville High parents were selected by taking one class teacher group from grade seven to ten. A total number of 300 parents were surveyed, 120 from Leesville Primary and 180 from Leesville High.

An accompanying introductory letter (Appendix F) was drafted using Tuckman's (1978, p. 233) suggestions. It explained that the questionnaire was still in the developmental stage and information would be used in the first instance to refine the questionnaire. Provided the information could be considered valid and reliable it would be made available to school leaders and policy makers. It was also explained that respondents would not be surveyed again and that confidentiality would be guaranteed.

Students were used as the 'postal system', carrying an envelope containing the questionnaire and accompanying letter home to their parents. There was some element of risk but if this method was successful it potentially reduced the cost of the project.

Two weeks were allowed for the return of the questionnaire, with a reminder sent via the normal newsletter. After three weeks there were 58 (48%) useable responses from Leesville Primary parents and 66 (37%) useable responses from Leesville High parents. This gave a sufficient sample with a total of 124 useable responses.

The problem identified by trial parents, principals and councillors in Phase One was confirmed. Response percentages indicated that many items written in the negative form were causing confusion on the SHOULD APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL scale. The larger sample, however, gave a more precise indication of sources of ambiguity.

Statements which gave a bi-modal distribution or a distribution markedly different from a similar statement written in the positive form were carefully examined. Care was taken as a bi-modal distribution may also have indicated the polarisation of opinion within the community. If this was the case then a similar statement written in the positive form should also have given a bi-modal distribution. Table 3.10 (Appendix G for complete table) illustrates statements which had similar meaning but responses gave quite different distributions. The distributions for the SHOULD APPLY TO THIS SCHOOL response show marked differences between statements three and twenty one and again between statements four and thirty four, yet they have similar meaning. Reference to interview comments and written comments at the end of the questionnaire indicated clearly that the distribution difference was caused by confusion when interpreting the negative items. This was consistent with Grady's (1993, p. 57) research who also avoided the use of negative statements for similar reasons.

Table 3.10
Bi-modal distributions: 1st Trial

Item No.	Statement	SHOULD (Preferred)					DOES (Actual)				
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	2	2	7	52	37	2	18	26	46	7
21-	Teachers in this school do not hold high expectations for my children	8	16	14	37	25	3	16	25	44	12
4+	Staff and students view this as a safe and secure place.	1	2	1	45	55	4	15	14	52	15
34-	Students do not feel safe and secure at school.	11	10	4	40	35	4	15	16	51	15

The researcher, with the assistance of the principal of Leesville Primary, examined the questionnaire and removed confusing statements. 25 items were removed resulting in a 35 item questionnaire. The item were then renumbered in a cyclic manner as before, which enabled quick marking.

All reports from this point use this recoded order for consistency. The remainder of this chapter reports on data required to understand the development of the instrument. No distinction is made between high school and primary school responses. Results of the survey are examined in chapter four.

The remaining 35 items were then analysed in accordance with the statistics mentioned in Table 3.9.

Table 3.11 below shows the statistics for the preferred scale while table 3.12 below provides the statistics for the actual scale. The direction of scoring is indicated after the item number.

The number of responses to the open ended questions in the first trial was very low. 17% of high school parents and 26% of primary school parents who returned useable questionnaires made a comment or comments. The information was analysed using the Miles and Huberman (1984) model. Responses judged to have similar meaning were

sorted into groups using two methods. A school teacher, who to this point had not been involved with the research, was given the comments and asked to sort them into groups. The comments were photo-copied and cut up into individual comments to facilitate the process. Concurrently the researcher divided them up using a similar method but tallied them individually.

A large number of comments referred to the complexity of the instrument, again with particular reference to the negative statements. As a result of these responses the final page was modified in the hope that it would generate more descriptive data. The revised questions were:

1. What are the good things about this school?
2. Where do you believe the school could improve?
3. Are there any comments you are prepared to make about this research or education in general?

Reports were then presented to all groups. There was general agreement that the instrument gave useful information. More importantly for this research, the reliability and validity of the data had been confirmed although scale alphas were too low on the preferred scale. The revised questionnaire (Appendix H) was considered much more respondent friendly. Permission was given by principals and councillors for the second trial.

Table 3.11
Analysis of Preference Items: First Trial

Content Category	Item No	% Response 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	r with scale	Alpha - Item	Scale Alpha
Sense of Mission	1+	0	0	8	63	29	4.20	0.56	0.52	0.62	0.65
	7-	7	12	13	46	22	3.64	1.16	0.60	0.74	
	13+	0	1	15	55	29	4.13	0.68	0.66	0.57	
	19+	0	2	9	61	28	4.16	0.65	0.67	0.56	
	25+	0	0	12	67	21	4.09	0.57	0.69	0.56	
	31+	1	2	4	65	28	4.18	0.67	0.62	0.59	
School Community Relationships	2+	2	2	3	54	40	4.28	0.77	0.38	0.60	0.47
	8+	0	2	5	64	29	4.20	0.62	0.53	0.40	
	14+	0	5	12	65	18	3.96	0.72	0.65	0.33	
	20+	0	1	13	64	23	4.08	0.62	0.66	0.31	
	26+	5	14	25	46	11	4.08	0.62	0.65	0.44	
High Expectations	3+	2	2	7	52	37	4.21	0.80	0.56	0.45	0.52
	9+	1	0	1	44	55	4.51	0.62	0.55	0.45	
	15+	0	6	22	46	25	3.91	0.85	0.44	0.54	
	21+	0	2	4	51	44	4.36	0.65	0.66	0.40	
	27-	5	8	9	35	43	4.04	1.13	0.54	0.57	
	32+	4	3	5	54	35	4.14	0.91	0.61	0.45	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	1	2	1	42	55	4.47	0.70	0.58	0.59	0.63
	10+	1	0	5	49	45	4.36	0.67	0.57	0.59	
	16+	3	2	12	58	25	4.02	0.84	0.38	0.67	
	22+	0	0	5	45	50	4045	0.60	0.61	0.58	
	28-	1	2	10	39	48	4.32	0.80	0.63	0.57	
	33-	1	10	8	48	33	4.02	0.95	0.59	0.61	
	35-	4	5	11	47	33	4.00	1.00	0.62	0.60	
Educational Leadership	5+	0	1	14	61	25	4.09	0.64	0.42	0.72	0.71
	11+	0	4	10	62	25	4.07	0.70	0.66	0.65	
	17+	2	5	15	55	22	3.90	0.87	0.68	0.65	
	23-	3	14	15	52	16	3.66	1.00	0.58	0.73	
	29+	1	3	8	57	31	4.14	0.75	0.75	0.62	
	34+	1	1	3	60	35	4.28	0.65	0.79	0.60	
Students Progress	6+	0	2	4	57	37	4.30	0.63	0.80	0.74	0.80
	12+	0	2	15	60	23	4.03	0.68	0.66	0.81	
	18+	0	2	15	61	22	4.03	0.67	0.80	0.74	
	24+	0	2	10	59	29	4.16	0.67	0.75	0.76	
	30+	0	1	3	64	33	4.28	0.56	0.73	0.72	

Table 3.12
Analysis of Perception Items: First Trial

Content Categories	Item No	%Response 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	r with scale	Alpha - Item	Scale Alpha
Sense of Mission	1+	5	9	21	61	4	3.48	0.92	0.80	0.74	0.80
	7-	2	26	20	40	12	3.34	1.05	0.68	0.80	
	13+	0	3	27	62	8	3.76	0.64	0.54	0.80	
	19+	2	17	34	43	5	3.31	0.88	0.84	0.73	
	25+	2	9	36	49	4	3.44	0.78	0.75	0.76	
	31+	3	8	31	54	4	3.48	0.81	0.67	0.78	
School Community Relationships	2+	6	16	15	52	11	3.45	1.09	0.61	0.61	0.63
	8+	1	16	14	59	10	3.61	0.91	0.45	0.66	
	14+	6	22	18	45	9	3.28	1.10	0.74	0.52	
	20+	3	18	40	35	5	3.20	0.89	0.78	0.47	
	26+	4	33	20	34	10	3.14	1.10	0.62	0.61	
High Expectations	3+	2	18	26	46	7	3.39	0.93	0.71	0.65	0.72
	9+	2	17	15	45	21	3.66	1.05	0.84	0.59	
	15+	1	10	37	44	8	3.48	0.82	0.38	0.75	
	21+	5	16	22	51	5	3.35	1.00	0.73	0.78	
	27-	3	20	26	33	18	3.44	1.08	0.59	0.71	
	32+	5	13	33	42	8	3.36	0.97	0.59	0.70	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	4	15	14	52	15	3.60	1.04	0.70	0.83	0.84
	10+	4	6	16	46	27	3.87	1.01	0.70	0.83	
	16+	10	18	23	42	7	3.18	1.13	0.74	0.82	
	22+	5	5	13	56	22	3.86	0.96	0.70	0.83	
	28-	1	11	16	46	25	3.85	0.96	0.84	0.80	
	33-	4	15	13	45	24	3.71	1.01	0.76	0.82	
	35-	8	13	21	51	7	3.36	1.06	0.62	0.84	
Educational Leadership	5+	4	17	40	34	5	3.20	0.92	0.73	0.76	0.80
	11+	6	28	28	33	5	3.01	1.03	0.68	0.78	
	17+	4	20	38	36	2	3.13	0.88	0.77	0.75	
	23-	3	35	20	35	6	3.07	1.04	0.67	0.93	
	29+	4	14	31	45	7	3.38	0.94	0.76	0.75	
	34+	0	6	12	66	15	3.91	0.72	0.64	0.78	
Students Progress	6+	2	5	17	65	11	3.79	0.77	0.80	0.65	0.75
	12+	1	3	33	52	12	3.71	0.75	0.60	0.75	
	18+	1	5	32	58	5	3.61	0.69	0.72	0.64	
	24+	2	6	31	54	7	3.58	0.79	0.74	0.68	
	30+	2	7	23	59	9	3.66	0.82	0.67	0.73	

3.10 Second Trial

A similar procedure was used to administer and analyse the information as for the first trial. This was necessary since the instrument had been modified and demonstrably satisfactory levels of reliability and validity were essential before the statewide survey could be conducted.

The instruction page was slightly modified (appendix I). Parents were asked to indicate in which grade (class) they had students. It was hypothesised from the first trial that parent perception may be dependent on the grade in which their child was studying. This added information was consistent with the original research questions.

The method of distribution was similar to the first trial. Students were again used as the 'postal system'. Students took home an envelope containing the questionnaire and a letter from the respective principals explaining the purposes of the research (Appendix J and K).

Two weeks were allowed before a reminder notice was sent, again via the school newsletter. Responses came in quickly with a 70% response rate achieved in four weeks. This compared favourably to the response rates reported by Gable *et al.* (1986), McGaw *et al.* (1993) and Macpherson (1994).

An investigation into the non-return of questionnaires was conducted. The main reasons were that envelopes were 'lost' by students, parents didn't have time to complete it and parents dislike of this type research. A very small number parents refused to make any comment. Not included in the above, but suspected by the researcher, were parents not being able to read and understand the questionnaire. One of the members in the trial group was illiterate and completed it after it was read to him. The readability of the instrument was between 13 and 14 years which would exclude some parents.

Methods of analysis were similar to the second trial. Table 3.13 and Table 3.14, below, provide the analysis of the preferred and actual scales respectively. Responses on both scales indicated the increased robustness of the instrument.

The percentage responses on the actual scale indicated a more even distribution although negatively skewed. The scale alpha reliability coefficients either stayed the same or improved. Item 7- appeared not to caused confusion on this scale but item 23- when removed, gave an improved alpha reading.

Percentages distributions were slightly more negatively skewed than measured in the first trial, with a resultant general increase in the mean for the preferred. Scale alphas were significantly higher indicating improved internal consistency.

Table 3.13
Preferred Item Analysis: Second Trial

Content Category	Item No	%Response 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	r with scale	Alpha - Item	Scale Alpha
Sense of Mission	1+	2	2	4	56	36	4.32	0.77	0.65	0.61	0.60
	7-	11	24	11	33	18	3.24	1.28	0.54	0.80	
	13+	0	1	8	58	32	4.21	0.66	0.70	0.59	
	19+	0	1	6	56	36	4.27	0.65	0.72	0.59	
	25+	0	1	11	59	29	4.16	0.64	0.69	0.59	
	31+	0	0	8	59	33	4.23	0.63	0.64	0.61	
School Community Relationships	2+	1	3	3	46	46	4.34	0.76	0.62	0.77	0.78
	8+	1	1	9	52	36	4.21	0.76	0.76	0.71	
	14+	0	3	16	54	27	4.04	0.77	0.69	0.74	
	20+	0	1	14	57	27	4.10	0.69	0.73	0.72	
	26+	3	6	12	50	29	3.95	0.97	0.76	0.74	
High Expectations	3+	0	3	8	45	44	4.29	0.76	0.71	0.68	0.74
	9+	0	0	4	37	58	4.52	0.65	0.68	0.69	
	15+	0	5	17	51	27	4.00	0.80	0.61	0.73	
	21+	0	2	6	48	43	4.32	0.71	0.70	0.69	
	27-	4	4	10	37	45	4.13	1.04	0.61	0.77	
	32+	1	1	8	43	48	4.36	0.74	0.71	0.69	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	1	0	1	38	60	4.56	0.62	0.55	0.71	0.73
	10+	1	0	4	42	53	4.56	0.67	0.60	0.69	
	16+	0	2	8	50	39	4.25	0.73	0.51	0.72	
	22+	0	2	4	41	53	4.44	0.70	0.64	0.69	
	28-	1	2	12	33	53	4.34	0.85	0.73	0.66	
	33-	7	11	8	31	44	3.94	1.26	0.66	0.74	
	35-	4	4	15	39	38	4.02	1.04	0.71	0.68	
Educational Leadership	5+	0	0	10	53	36	4.25	0.65	0.65	0.53	0.62
	11+	0	3	10	56	30	4.14	0.72	0.66	0.53	
	17+	0	3	9	55	33	4.18	0.70	0.61	0.55	
	23-	15	22	14	31	19	3.17	1.36	0.58	0.75	
	29+	1	1	10	58	31	4.16	0.70	0.59	0.56	
	34+	0	0	3	50	47	4.42	0.61	0.65	0.54	
Students Progress	6+	0	0	4	48	47	4.42	0.60	0.73	0.76	0.80
	12+	0	0	8	58	33	4.23	0.65	0.72	0.77	
	18+	0	1	11	56	31	4.18	0.67	0.75	0.76	
	24+	0	1	8	56	34	4.23	0.65	0.78	0.70	
	30+	0	1	5	54	40	4.34	0.61	0.73	0.71	

Two statements, specifically item number 7- (the purpose of the school is not generally understood) and item number 23- (I know little about the teaching program at this school) had bi-modal distributions and were examined as explained in Table 3.9.

The resultant scale alpha reliability coefficients increased to 0.80 , 0.75 and respectively if they were removed. They were removed from any reports and further analysis as they were judged to be confusing items. There was no corroborating evidence of a polarisation of opinion on these items.

The process outlined in section 3.8 was then used to analyse the descriptive data. The number of comments on the optional information page increased markedly in the second trial. The number making at least one comment increased from 17% to 56% for high school parents and from 26% to 50% percent for primary school parents.

There was a large number of comments about the research with a balance between positive and negative statements. Some still considered it too long and repetitive and the negative statements were again mentioned as a source of confusion on the preferred scale. Others thought the research was a good idea and an easy way of attaining parent opinion.

Principals and councils of both schools were given reports. The quantitative data were presented in a seven page report with all comments photocopied as agreed in the initial discussions and declared in a letter that went home to parents.

Table 3.14
Actual Item Analysis: Second Trial

Content Category	Item No	% Response 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	r with scale	Alpha - Item	Scale Alpha
Sense of Mission	1+	1	11	15	59	13	3.72	0.88	0.74	0.76	0.80
	7-	3	25	22	41	10	3.30	1.03	0.63	0.82	
	13+	0	4	27	59	9	3.73	0.69	0.70	0.77	
	19+	2	16	23	46	13	3.50	0.98	0.87	0.71	
	25+	1	11	31	52	6	3.51	0.80	0.75	0.76	
	31+	1	10	19	58	12	3.69	0.85	0.63	0.78	
School Community Relationships	2+	4	15	10	58	12	3.59	1.01	0.71	0.71	0.75
	8+	1	12	18	59	11	3.67	0.86	0.54	0.77	
	14+	4	25	23	40	7	3.21	1.04	0.73	0.70	
	20+	4	21	29	43	3	3.20	0.93	0.80	0.66	
	26+	2	14	29	42	13	3.50	0.97	0.74	0.70	
High Expectations	3+	2	15	20	55	8	3.52	0.92	0.73	0.67	0.74
	9+	1	13	16	56	15	3.70	0.90	0.73	0.67	
	15+	2	11	27	55	5	3.52	0.82	0.46	0.75	
	21+	6	13	28	45	7	3.34	1.01	0.68	0.69	
	27-	9	16	25	33	17	3.33	1.20	0.65	0.74	
	32+	5	10	28	48	10	3.49	0.96	0.74	0.67	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	3	9	12	54	21	3.82	0.97	0.77	0.87	0.88
	10+	3	7	11	54	25	3.92	0.95	0.74	0.87	
	16+	9	14	24	46	7	3.28	1.09	0.80	0.87	
	22+	3	6	14	51	27	3.94	0.94	0.72	0.87	
	28-	3	7	20	43	28	3.85	1.00	0.83	0.86	
	33-	3	12	14	41	30	3.84	1.06	0.75	0.87	
	35-	5	11	23	42	20	3.61	1.06	0.77	0.87	
Educational Leadership	5+	3	15	31	44	8	3.38	0.93	0.74	0.72	0.77
	11+	4	16	28	46	6	3.34	0.96	0.64	0.74	
	17+	6	25	24	40	6	3.15	1.04	0.76	0.71	
	23-	8	36	19	31	6	2.91	1.11	0.65	0.92	
	29+	3	11	24	52	9	3.54	0.91	0.81	0.69	
	34+	0	2	8	66	24	4.12	0.62	0.45	0.77	
Students Progress	6+	1	3	16	67	13	3.89	0.68	0.70	0.63	0.70
	12+	0	3	23	65	8	3.78	0.63	0.61	0.67	
	18+	0	7	33	54	6	3.60	0.71	0.71	0.62	
	24+	0	6	27	60	7	3.67	0.71	0.73	0.61	
	30+	2	3	15	69	11	3.83	0.74	0.58	0.70	

The seven pages (Appendix K) included a summary page as illustrated in Table 3.15 and a separate page for each of the content categories. Table 3.16 illustrates the Safe and

Orderly Environment category for Leesville Primary School. SD refers to Standard Deviation.

Table 3.15
Summary Page: Leesville Primary School

School Characteristics	
Type	primary
No. of students	469
No. of full time equivalent teachers	24.5
Educational Needs Index	41.2
Comparative Size	large
Location	rural

No (%) Useable Responses	124 (65)
No making at least one optional comment.	58

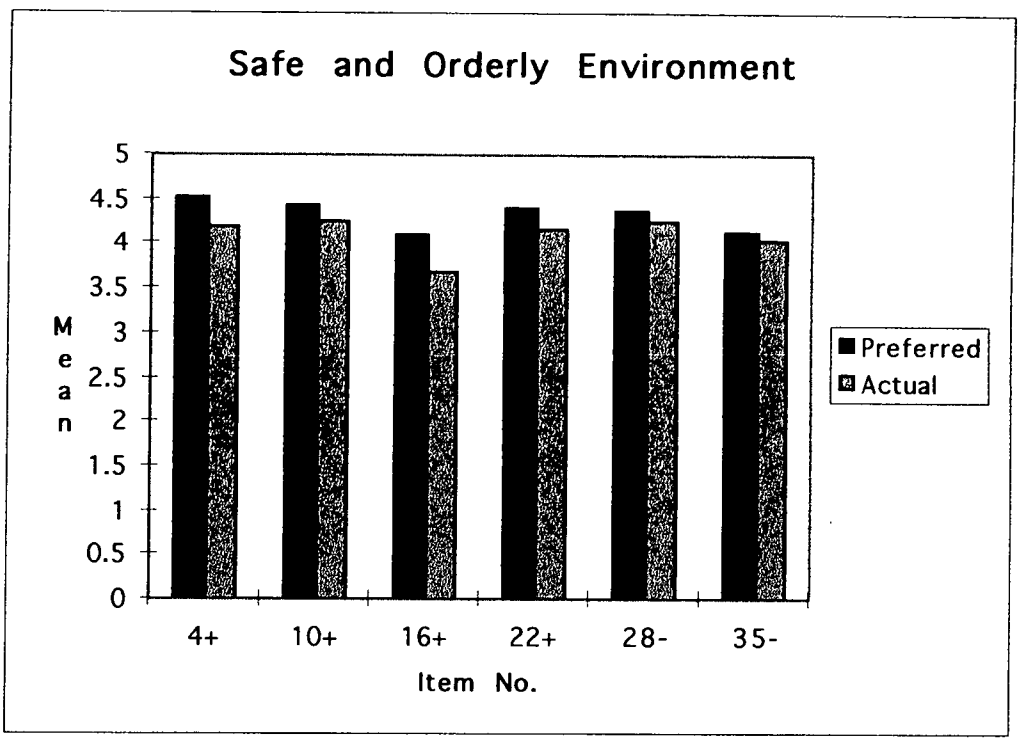
Descriptive Comments	positive		negative	
Category	n	%	n	%
Principal & Teachers Service (caring, comradeship, encouraging, respect, co-operative, students as individuals)	37	46	13	29
Curriculum Policies (choice, variety, life skills, basic numeracy and literacy)	18	22	11	24
Behaviour Management (safety, order, consistency, disruptive, fairness)	4	5	7	16
School Ethos (communication, atmosphere, students progress, parent contact, reports)	22	27	14	31
TOTAL	81	100	45	100
External School Issues Government Funding			2	
Comments on Research Other	9		9	

At this point in the project it became clear that the revised questionnaire was reliable and providing valid data concerning the research questions. It was, on balance, favourably received by parents and generated a large amount of descriptive data.

Both Leesville High and Primary School leaders accepted the reports as useful information which they would take into consideration. They also predicted that the instrument would be favourably received in other schools. In other words, they indicated that political

support, would be given if informally sought by colleagues. Subsequent evidence confirmed that this occurred.

Table 3.16
Safe and Orderly Environment: Leesville Primary School



Safe and Orderly Environment

Item No	Statement	Preferred % Response 1	2	3	4	5	Actual % Response 1	2	3	4	5	Preferred mean	SD	Actual mean	SD
4+	Staff and students view this place as a safe and secure place.	2	0	1	39	58	0	3	8	56	32	4.51	0.71	4.18	0.71
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	2	0	5	41	52	0	2	6	54	37	4.42	0.76	4.26	0.68
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	1	4	10	54	30	2	8	22	59	10	4.10	0.80	3.67	0.82
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules	1	3	5	39	52	1	4	10	48	37	4.39	0.79	4.16	0.83
28-	This is an unruly school.	1	0	15	29	55	1	1	12	45	42	4.37	0.81	4.26	0.71
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	2	2	18	36	42	1	3	17	50	30	4.14	0.91	4.04	0.82

NB 1=SD, 2=D, N=3, 4=A and 5=SA for positive statements, reverse for items written in the negative

3.11 Statewide Survey

It was decided to proceed with the statewide survey in November 1992, which gave just enough time to have it distributed and returned before the end of the year. To leave it until 1993 would have meant a delay of up to six months.

This decision was made, although analysis of the second trial was not, at that time, fully complete. The judgement was made on various factors; speed at which returns came in, the increased number of descriptive comments and the increased number of useable responses. The first trial data had also indicated that it produced reliable and valid data and the 'hunch' was that this would improve in the second trial after confusing statements were removed. Similarly, Hall *et al.* (1977) found that the reliability and validity of their *Stages of Concern Questionnaire* improved with each refinement during development As described in 3.10, subsequent statistical analysis confirmed the improved reliability and validity of the instrument. It is acknowledged, however, that not removing statements 7- and 23- is a limitation of the research but it was not possible given the time constraints.

The previous two years had been a time of educational cuts and industrial unrest but this seemed a relatively quiet time with few matters relating to education being reported in the media. On balance it appeared appropriate to proceed. Industrial unrest however, again quickly escalated and, within the space of five days, teachers were called out on strike in

protest against government policy that was unrelated to the substance of the research. The questionnaires had, by then, been posted to the schools and could not be stopped. The day of the strike, coincided with the delivery of most envelopes to homes throughout the state.

A random stratified sample was taken from the 161 primary schools, 34 high schools and 26 district high schools, the total number of public schools at the time of the survey. Approximately 15% of the schools were sampled. Schools were categorised according to type, size and socioeconomic background. Table 3.17, below, illustrates the sampling structure.

Educational Needs Index (ENI) (DEA 1994d, p.400) was the DEA's measure of the socioeconomic background of the community schools serve. ENI was calculated by adding the Socio-Economic Status (SES) Index to the proportion of students receiving government assistance through the Student Assistance Scheme. The SES took into account the occupation, unemployment, educational levels of parents, family income and aboriginality. These socio-economic statistics were based on 1986 census data. ENI's varied from 20 to 90 with the mean about 40. The lower the ENI the higher the SES of the school community.

Selected schools were sent a package comprising a letter of explanation to the principal (Appendix L), envelopes containing the questionnaire and letter (appendix M) to go to

parents, and an addressed envelope to return each completed questionnaire. Suggested methods of distribution were made, in the letter to the principal, emphasising the need for the questionnaires to be distributed randomly.

Table 3.17
Statewide Sampling Structure

Primary Schools	Population >210 ENI< 35 No of Schools =37 No Selected =5	Population >210 ENI> 35 No of Schools =46 No Selected =6
	Population <210 ENI <35 No of Schools =40 No Selected =5	Population <210 ENI >35 No of Schools =38 No Selected =5
High Schools	Population >550 ENI<35 No of Schools =10 No Selected = 2	Population >550 ENI> 35 No of Schools =7 No Selected =1
	Population < 550 ENI<35 No of Schools =5 No Selected =1	Population < 550 ENI>35 No of Schools =12 No Selected =2
District High Schools	Population >250 ENI< 45 No of Schools = 7 No Selected =1	Population >250 ENI> 45 No of Schools =6 No Selected =1
	Population < 250 ENI< 45 No of Schools =5 No Selected =1	Population <250 ENI> 45 No of Schools =7 No Selected =1

The researcher was very concerned to ensure that the anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were protected. Parents were invited to write comments on the optional page at the end of the questionnaire, further emphasising the need for confidentiality.

Parents were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it, sealed in the envelope provided, to their school. It was explained that the envelopes would then be returned, unopened to the researcher, at the University of Tasmania - Launceston.

50 questionnaires were sent to schools except those who had less than 50 sets of parents. Three schools did not take part. The principal of one school explained that research with parents had already taken place that year and felt that it was against the school's interest to survey them again. Another principal explained that the school was to close at the end of the year and, therefore, considered the research inappropriate. The principal of the third school offered no reason for non-participation. All other selected schools took part in the research.

After two weeks each school was phoned to discuss the rate of return. It was suggested that a reminder via the school newsletter would help the response rates. Schools were happy to oblige although some principals pointed out that schools were extremely busy at that time of the year.

Response rates varied from 40% to 90% with the average approximately 60%. Again these response rates compare favourably with the return rates reported by Gable *et al.* (1986), McGaw *et al.* (1993) and Macpherson (1994).

Table 3.19
Analysis of Perceptions Items: Statewide Sample

Content Categories	Item No	% Response 1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	r with scale	Alpha - Item	Scale Alpha
Sense of Mission	1+	1	7	12	62	17	3.8	0.83	0.76	0.74	0.80
	7-	3	20	17	42	17	3.5	1.1	0.61	0.82	
	13+	1	3	21	58	17	3.9	0.78	0.70	0.76	
	19+	2	11	23	50	14	3.6	0.92	0.82	0.73	
	25+	1	7	30	50	12	3.6	0.81	0.74	0.75	
	31+	1	8	18	58	15	3.8	0.85	0.65	0.78	
School Community Relationships	2+	3	14	8	54	23	3.7	1.0	0.73	0.69	0.80
	8+	2	12	16	52	18	3.7	0.97	0.59	0.75	
	14+	4	18	19	41	18	3.5	1.1	0.78	0.66	
	20+	4	18	26	41	11	3.4	1.0	0.74	0.68	
	26+	1	11	18	46	24	3.8	0.96	0.69	0.71	
High Expectations	3+	3	11	18	53	15	3.6	0.96	0.74	0.72	0.77
	9+	2	9	13	51	25	3.9	0.94	0.74	0.72	
	15+	3	11	26	51	9	3.5	0.91	0.51	0.78	
	21+	5	14	24	43	13	3.4	1.1	0.73	0.73	
	27-	7	13	17	38	26	3.6	1.2	0.66	0.76	
	32+	2	8	21	50	19	3.7	0.93	0.74	0.72	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	2	6	10	53	29	4.0	0.91	0.72	0.85	0.87
	10+	2	5	8	53	33	4.1	0.87	0.70	0.85	
	16+	7	11	17	51	14	3.5	1.0	0.81	0.84	
	22+	2	5	10	47	36	4.1	0.93	0.74	0.85	
	28-	2	6	12	34	46	4.1	1.0	0.81	0.84	
	33-	3	7	9	35	46	4.1	1.0	0.73	0.85	
	35-	4	10	17	41	29	3.8	1.1	0.73	0.85	
Educational Leadership	5+	3	13	25	45	13	3.5	0.99	0.74	0.77	0.80
	11+	4	17	23	43	12	3.4	1.0	0.74	0.76	
	17+	4	21	20	44	10	3.3	1.1	0.78	0.75	
	23-	6	30	15	32	16	3.2	1.2	0.66	0.75	
	29+	3	11	23	49	14	3.6	0.96	0.78	0.75	
	34+	1	2	6	59	32	4.2	0.68	0.57	0.80	
Students Progress	6+	1	3	13	62	21	4.0	0.73	0.64	0.74	0.78
	12+	0	3	21	58	18	3.9	0.73	0.63	0.74	
	18+	1	7	29	53	10	3.6	0.79	0.72	0.72	
	24+	1	4	25	57	13	3.7	0.77	0.72	0.71	
	30+	2	6	15	61	16	3.8	0.83	0.61	0.78	

Principals of schools involved in the statewide survey were sent a letter (Appendix O) explaining how the responses were scored and a summary of their school data. It was presented in a similar manner to the Leesville Schools' reports (Appendices PA to P).

3.12 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis, using both principal components and image analysis, was used to examine the validity of the instrument for the actual scale. Parametric and non-parametric statistics were used to investigate the nature of the data. Responses to the preferences scale were found not to be normally distributed and hence were not factor analysed. Since the quantitative data from the statewide survey and the Melville Swamp Cluster were so similar, all data were combined for this analysis. Data gathered by items 7- and 23- were removed.

Principal component analysis is used when the data set represents a random sample of observations and the variables are a fairly complete collection of those that are of interest (*Statview* 1992, p. 358). The first condition was satisfied. The observations, while not strictly random, were representative of the parent population. The second condition was somewhat violated as the variables could not be classed as a complete collection of variables related to school effectiveness. Research is yet to produce conclusive answers.

Image analysis focuses more on the sampling of variables than the sampling of subjects (*Statview* 1992, p. 358). The variables chosen were a sample from a potentially large, possibly unmeasurable, universe of variables. One of the criticisms of the literature on school effectiveness, as stated in Chapter Two, was that the variables vary in number and type from study to study. Although the statements used for this study were arrived at by

exhaustive local consensus building, it was acknowledged that there may have been many other variables and statements that could have been used.

Given these limitations, it was decided that a combination of principal component and image analysis was appropriate to investigate the data. Initially factors with eigen values greater than one were investigated then two, three, four, five and six factors were examined. The four-factor analysis, reported as Table 3.20 and Table 3.21 below, gave the best insight into how the items clustered. The following key was used for both tables; M = Sense of Mission , R = School Community Relationships, E = High Expectations, S = Safe and Orderly Environment, L = Educational Leadership and P= Student Progress.

Table 3.20 indicated that there was one dominant factor and possibly three others. Except for item 15+ and item 8+, there is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved, factor one loading is greater than 0.5. Factor two indicated that Safe and Orderly Environment items (4+,10+,16+,22+,28-,33- and 35) cluster with negative loadings of greater than .3 except for item 10+, there are well known codes of conduct for this school, which had a low negative value of -.27. Item 10+ was however more likely to be associated with Safe and Orderly Environment statements than other statements.

Table 3.20

Factor Analysis of Primary Components: Oblique Solution Primary Pattern Matrix

	Item	Statement	Fac. 1	Fac. 2	Fac. 3	Fac. 4
M	1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	.64	-.04	-.32	-.27
M	13	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	.64	.07	-.22	-.14
M	19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	.71	.03	-.28	-.25
M	25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	.68	.05	-.20	-.15
M	31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	.59	.01	-.11	-.01
R	2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	.60	.22	-.01	.25
R	8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	.41	.22	-.38	.08
R	14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	.59	.13	-.12	.37
R	20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	.70	.25	-.16	.02
R	26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	.49	-.07	-.25	.43
H	3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	.64	.08	.20	.13
H	9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	.68	.06	.11	.17
H	15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	.39	.24	.36	-.12
H	21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	.66	.18	.10	.31
H	27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	.57	-.21	.18	.31
H	32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasise success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	.69	-.11	.11	.21
S	4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place	.60	-.39	-.04	-.04
S	10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school	.64	-.27	-.15	-.37
S	16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	.62	-.46	.12	-.10
S	22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules	.65	-.34	-.08	-.35
S	28-	This is an unruly school.	.63	-.51	.15	-.03
S	33-	There is no sense of security and order at this school.	.57	-.49	.14	.10
S	35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	.60	-.38	.18	.14
L	5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	.69	.20	-.18	.66
L	11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	.61	.23	-.23	-.11
L	17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	.67	.21	-.18	-.04
L	29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	.69	.14	-.21	.10
L	34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	.54	-.08	.06	.17
P	6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	.58	.23	.29	.03
P	12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	.56	.22	.34	-.11
P	18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	.56	.28	.41	-.24
P	24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	.55	.31	.45	-.24
P	30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked	.54	.09	.31	.11

Table 3.21
Harris Image Analysis: Oblique Solution Primary Pattern Matrix

	Item	Statement	Fac. 1	Fac. 2	Fac. 3	Fac. 4
M	1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	-.25	-.15	.73	.98
M	13	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	.04	-.08	.70	.55
M	19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	-.09	-.21	.81	.93
M	25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	.11	-.10	.70	.63
M	31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	-.00	.22	.55	.23
R	2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	.19	.25	.86	-.49
R	8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	-.30	-.21	.96	.02
R	14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	-.12	.45	.85	-.55
R	20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	.19	-.09	1.01	-.00
R	26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	-.54	.61	.73	-.39
H	3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	.57	.57	.33	-.41
H	9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	.43	.55	.42	-.28
H	15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	1.00	.01	-.00	-.10
H	21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	.62	.16	.50	-.08
H	27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	.11	1.09	0.07	-.45
H	32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasise success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	.17	.87	.32	-.26
S	4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place	-.23	.88	-.04	.57
S	10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school	.01	.13	.03	1.55
S	16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	.03	1.06	-.39	.72
S	22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules	.08	.32	-.16	1.53
S	28-	This is an unruly school.	-.03	1.30	-.44	.54
S	33-	There is no sense of security and order at this school.	-.13	1.30	-.34	.25
S	35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	-.02	1.27	-.16	-.04
L	5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	.06	.05	.99	-.07
L	11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc.) to parents for discussion.	.14	-.28	.90	.30
L	17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	.17	-.13	.94	.14
L	29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	-.06	.13	.99	-.06
L	34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	.11	.57	.29	-.09
P	6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	1.10	.11	.15	-.12
P	12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	1.28	.00	-.03	.11
P	18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	1.67	-.22	-.14	.27
P	24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	1.79	-.25	-.19	.24
P	30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked	.75	.47	.09	-.33

Factor three indicated that student progress statements clustered along with item 15+; students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level. It was noted that all items related to sense of mission, school community relationships and educational leadership, except for item 34+, all recorded a negative factor loading along with item 4+, 10+ and 22+, indicating a clustering of these items.

Factor four indicated that item 26+, the school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning, was viewed differently from other statements. It was possibly related to a three-item cluster; item 14+, there are many informal contacts between teachers and parents, item 21+, students are challenged to capacity, and item 27-, students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.

The Harris Image analysis, Table 3.21, has values greater than one, 'simply because they are regression weights' (*Statview* 1992, p. 368). Factor one indicated that student progress items (6+, 12+, 18+, 24+ and 30+), and item 15+ from high expectations, clearly cluster.

Factor two indicated that five safe and orderly environment items (4+, 16+, , 28-, 33- and 35-) cluster. Statement 10+ and 22+ are concerned with knowledge of codes of behaviour and rules and were considered differently from the other statements which were concerned more with enactment.

Factor three indicated that statements concerning sense of mission, school community relationships and educational leadership cluster, except for item 34+. This was similar to the outcome of the Principal Components analysis.

Factor four indicates that items 1+, 19+, 4+ and 22+ cluster. They are all concerned with knowledge of codes of behaviour, objectives and/or policies. This is consistent with the factor two result.

Reports of findings made in Chapter Four were based on individual items so that data was not lost through aggregation and on groupings based on the factor analyses above. Sense of mission, school community relationships and educational leadership items were grouped together, while acknowledging that item 34+ and item 26+ were considered differently, and entitled 'communication'. High expectations and student progress statements were grouped under the heading 'teaching and attainment', recognising that item 15+ was considered differently. 'Safe and orderly environment' items were reported as a separate group, while acknowledging that there was a difference between referring to knowledge of codes of behaviour and the enactment of behaviour codes.

3.13 Summary

A reliable survey instrument was developed to obtain valid data related to the research questions. The Leesville High and Primary School community leaders request that all parents be surveyed allowed for extensive testing and refining of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was shown to have political support and to be technically sound. The questionnaire was hand scored by the researcher and analysed using a computer spreadsheet. Descriptive data was analysed by the researcher with the help of one other person. Ethical concerns, such as the confidentiality of responses and informed consent, were addressed. Parametric and non-parametric statistics were used to investigate the nature of the data.

The statewide sample was a stratified representative sample from which enough useable responses were obtained to complete data analysis in order to help answer the research questions. Results are presented in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

RESULTS and DISCUSSIONS

This chapter reports the results of investigations into the nature of the data and investigations that helped shed light on the research questions.

Leesville High and Primary School parents' perceptions of school effectiveness are reported in some detail after the nature of the data is described.

Sections that follow report results of investigations into parents' perceptions of school effectiveness and how they relate to the type of school, size of school, location of school and finally, to the socioeconomic background of the community the schools serve.

4.1 Introduction

The analyses reported in this chapter were based, in the main, on parametric statistics although, in some instances, non-parametric statistics were appropriate. Chi square tests, standard deviations, kurtosis and skewness investigations were used to determine the nature of the data.

Responses for the preference (should apply) scale were found not to be normally distributed. Large chi squared values with associated low confidence levels for the null hypothesis were found. The distributions were negatively skewed and platykurtic,

although the size of the standard deviations was acceptable. Chi square analysis of the perception actual (does apply) scale indicated that the distributions were, in the main, normal. The distributions had acceptable levels of kurtosis, skewness and standard deviation.

The preference scale was, therefore, not subjected to factor analysis. On the other hand, factor analysis of the perception scale was appropriate, as illustrated in Chapter Three. Based on this factor analysis, statements were divided into three groups and entitled 'communication', 'teaching and attainment', and 'safe and orderly environment'. Results were presented using these groupings although the order within the group is similar to the original groupings to allow for consistency throughout the entire report.

Initially non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U Test and Wilcoxon signed rank tests, and parametric unpaired and paired *t* tests were used to investigate the differences between the perception and preference scales and between different groups within each scale.

Underlying the *t* tests, which were used to make the case for correlation and regression analysis, are the assumptions that the sample data are randomly drawn and that the sample population is normally distributed (Popham and Siontnik 1973, p.134). Cohen and Cohen (1975, p. 48) pointed out, however, that no assumption concerning the characteristics of the population from which a sample is drawn need be made when using correlation, regression and similar coefficients in order to describe the data generated in a

study. They further claim that these tests, and in particular the ones relevant for this study, are quite robust and liberal and can withstand a minor degree of violation of assumptions (Grady 1993, p. 54). The particular value of retaining parametric tests was that they were more flexible. The Mann Whitney U test does not permit the analysis of more than two variables on a nominal scale and there were 27 sets of school data to be analysed.

Results were, nevertheless, found to be very similar for both parametric and non-parametric analysis. Only parametric analysis was therefore reported, unless the non-parametric analysis was found to be significantly different. The outliers in this data, for example, which can have a dramatic influence on the mean (*Statview Manual* 1992, p. 353) and suggest that the use of the paired and unpaired *t* tests is inappropriate, rarely affected the results at the significance level required for this study. There were only two results, concerning item 31+ and item 22+, where a two-tailed test was affected by an outlier when Leesville High and Leesville Primary schools' data were analysed. Results close to $p=0.05$ were subsequently checked using non-parametric tests. Significant differences were, therefore defined as those where a $p<.05$ was found using a 2 tailed paired or unpaired t test, and verified using the Mann Whitney U test or the Wilcoxon signed rank test.

Analysis was reported using tables showing percentages of respondents who made Strongly Agree and Agree responses. Means, standard deviations and *t* tests were used to

compare between and within schools and to evaluate the difference between preference and perception scale responses where required. Optional comments were used to verify or otherwise explore patterns in the data.

'Support' for an item was defined as more than 70% of respondents indicating Strongly Agree or Agree, ambivalent support was 30% to 70% and when below 30% the item was deemed not to be supported. This approach had recently been agreed between stakeholders in Tasmania as indicating 'politically significant' levels of support to policy proposals (Macpherson 1994. p.9). These cut off points were viewed liberally with the relative support of similar items taken into consideration when interpreting the tables.

4.2 Leesville Primary and Leesville High

Results for Leesville High School and Leesville Primary indicated considerable differences in parent perceptions between the schools with some within-school variation. The number of responses from Leesville Primary and Leesville High School parents allowed a within school analysis to be made. Responses were grouped into kindergarten prep, grade one and two, grade three and four, grade five and six for the primary school responses. Similarly, high school responses were grouped into grade seven and eight, and nine and ten.

The parents of Leesville High School and Leesville Primary School were, statistically, the same group. A considerable number of parents had students in both schools. At the time of the survey more than 60% of Leesville High School students had attended Leesville Primary School. The reported data that follows then, were statistically, and in many cases empirically, from the same respondents. Between school comparisons are reported but where within school variation is significant this is also explained. The reported data then, came from the 'same' respondents making comments about different school sectors.

Negative statements were reverse scored. As explained in Chapter 3, items related to the content categories Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership items clustered and entitled Communication. Items related to the content categories High Expectations and Student Progress clustered and entitled 'Teaching and Attainment'. Items related to the content category Safe and Orderly Environment formed a third distinct cluster, and this title remained unaltered.

Table 4.2.1, Table 4.2.2 and Table 4.2.3 report the percentage responses that either Strongly Agreed or Agreed with each statement. The key for interpretation is SA mean Strongly Agree A means Agree, Pref. means Preference (Should Apply) and Act. means Actual or Perception (Does Apply). %SA+A means the percentage of respondents who Strongly Agreed and Agreed to an item statement. $\bar{x}$ refers to the mean and SD is the abbreviation for Stanadard Deviation. These abbreviations will be used throughout the chapter.

Table 4.2.1
% Supportive Responses for Communication Cluster
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item No.	Statement	High		Primary	
		% SA+A		% SA+A	
	Sense of Mission Items (M)	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	92	56	92	70
13	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	90	58	90	81
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	94	44	90	75
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	90	46	85	70
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	95	63	87	76
	School Community Relationships Items (R)				
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress.	93	55	92	88
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	89	64	88	75
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	81	27	81	71
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	87	31	81	63
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	74	24	84	92
	Educational Leadership Items (L)				
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	92	42	85	61
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	88	44	85	60
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	88	36	88	56
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	88	50	89	74
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	98	85	95	95
	$\bar{x}$ of M, R and L items	89	48	87	74

Table 4.2.2
% Supportive Responses for Teaching and Attainment Cluster
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item No	Statement	High % SA+A		Primary % SA+A	
	High Expectations Items (E)	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	90	55	88	72
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	96	57	93	85
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	83	64	72	57
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	92	46	90	60
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	78	33	87	89
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	90	48	90	69
	Student Progress Items (P)				
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	98	76	92	86
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	89	68	92	79
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	89	64	86	56
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	95	66	84	68
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked	99	74	87	86
	$\bar{x}$ of E and P items	91	59	87	73

High school parent support for item 26+ (74%) was significantly below ($t = 9.12$, $p<.01$) the mean support (89%) for Communication items. Similarly high school parent support for item 27- (78%) was significantly below ($t = 12.19$, $p<.01$) the mean support (91%) for Teaching and Attainment items. This indicates some ambivalence to the use of parents and community volunteers to assist learning and the use of praise within high school.

Table 4.2.3
% Response for Safe and Orderly Environment Cluster
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item No	Statement	High		Primary	
		% SA+A		% SA +A	
		Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place	98	64	97	89
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school	95	68	93	91
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	93	38	85	69
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules	96	71	91	85
28-	This is an unruly school.	87	55	84	86
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	76	46	78	79
	$\bar{x}$	91	59	87	73

Primary school parent support for item 15+ (72%) was significantly below ($t = 8.84$, $p<.01$) the average support of 87%, reflecting some ambivalence as to whether subject matter should be mastered at each grade level. Optional comments reflect this ambivalence with some parents indicating that 'individual needs of students should be addressed' while others indicated concern about subject matter.

High school parent support for item 35- was 76%, significantly lower ($t= 3.04$, $p<.01$) than the mean of 91%. Many optional comments from both groups indicated support for inter-school exchanges, visiting performers and varied activities, which may explain this difference.

Responses to the actual scale indicated that high school parents supported item 34+, availability of principal and senior staff to discuss matters concerning teaching , and 22+, the school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules. Item 26+, the use of parents and community volunteers to assist learning was not supported, with ambivalent support to all other items. Average support for this scale was 54%. Primary school parents' support 16 of the items on the actual scale, are ambivalent to the remainder. The average support for this scale was 75%.

The paired *t* test, confirmed with the Wilcoxon signed rank test, revealed that there was a significant difference between the preferences and perceptions of high school parents for all items. Primary school parent responses indicated a significant difference for all items except item 26+ ($t = .30$, $p = 0.77$) and 34+ ($t = 1.92$, $p = 0.06$). The actual response (92%) was higher than the preferred response (84%) for item 26+ concerning the use of parents and community volunteers. Some primary school parents commented that while it was important to reinforce learning they felt that volunteering degraded their value and it involved 'out of pocket expenses for mothers who help many more than their own children.' (Refer to appendix Q for example comments.)

Item 34+ indicated that principals and senior staff were available for discussions about teaching, consistent with parent expectations.

The previous tables suggest there were differences in perception both within scales and between scales. Tables 4.2.4 to 4.2.9 provide means, standard deviations, unpaired *t* test and associated confidence levels describing the variations.

Parents' expressed preferences for the communication variable, Table 4.2.4, were different on two statements. Responses to item 26+ indicated that parents considered volunteers should be used more in primary schools while it was more important for methods of instruction and assessment, item 5+, to be explained to parents of high school students. Assessment is mentioned in 5+ but not in 11+ which shows no difference between the two schools indicating that methods of assessment were more important to high school parents than primary school parents.

Within and between school analysis revealed that kindergarten and preparatory pupils' parent responses were significantly lower ($t > 2.4$, $p < .03$) on items 1+, 19+, 25+ and 31+ than high school parent responses, indicating that overall goals, aims and objectives were not as important. Parents of grade one and two students considered parent and community volunteers more important than any other group. It was not perceived as important to parents of the lower primary school students to have the principal and senior staff explain methods of instruction and assessment as it is to other parents.

Junior primary school pupils are often delivered and picked up from the classroom which results in frequent informal discussions between teacher and parent. This may be why

parents of junior primary school parents consider they have a better understanding of the goals of the particular school and schooling in general and that they don't consider formal discussions as important as parents of other students. As the student becomes more independent, and it is no longer necessary to deliver and pick up the child from the classroom, the frequency of these informal discussions decrease. Parents then have to rely more on what their child tells them and on the formal communications from teachers and school leaders to maintain an understanding of their child's progress and the school in general.

Table 4.2.4
Communication Cluster - Preferred
Leesville High and Leesville Primary
('a' not significant using Mann Whitney U test)

Item No.	Statement	High		Primary			
	Sense of Mission Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	4.28	0.65	4.17	0.87	1.03	0.30
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	4.19	0.61	4.22	0.71	-.35	0.72
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	4.31	0.60	4.21	0.71	1.01	0.30
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	4.17	0.58	4.14	0.70	0.35	0.72
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	4.31	0.56	4.14	0.69	2.00	0.04 a
	School Community Relationships Items						
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress.	4.35	0.80	4.33	0.70	0.15	0.87
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	4.19	0.69	4.25	0.83	-.58	0.55
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	4.02	0.73	4.06	0.80	-.35	0.72
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	4.13	0.64	4.06	0.75	0.79	0.42
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	3.82	0.94	4.10	0.98	-2.24	0.02
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	4.35	0.61	4.13	0.68	2.52	0.01

	Educational Leadership Items						
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	4.20	0.66	4.08	0.78	1.28	0.20
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	4.16	0.71	4.21	0.70	-.56	0.58
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	4.10	0.70	4.24	0.70	-1.47	0.14
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	4.43	0.57	4.40	0.66	0.41	0.68
	$\bar{x}$	4.20	0.41	4.19	0.54	0.27	0.79

The means for all statements are significantly higher for primary school parent responses for the perceptions, as provided in Table 4.2.5. There is some within school variation but the major variation is clearly between schools. Recalling that these responses are statistically and in many cases empirically from the same respondents, this data illustrates that parents consider there are significantly more communication problems between high school teachers, high school leaders and parents than primary school teachers, primary school teachers and parents. Some optional comments specifically mentioned the lack of communication once students reach high school.

Students at primary school identify with one teacher as 'their teacher' although they may have other teachers who take them from time to time. Students at Leesville High School may have had up to twelve teachers in year seven and eight and up to ten teachers in years nine and ten. This may be a possible source of this perceived communication problem.

Table 4.2.5
Cluster of Communication Perceptions (Apply)
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item No	Statement	High		Primary			
	Sense of Mission Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	3.41	0.94	4.06	0.64	-6.52	<.01
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	3.55	0.75	3.93	0.56	-4.55	<.01
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	3.20	1.05	3.84	0.78	-5.56	<.01
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	3..30	0.85	3.75	0.67	-4.83	<.01
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	3.54	0.91	3.86	0.73	-3.16	<.01
	School Community Relationships						
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	3.21	1.10	4.03	0.66	-7.10	<.01
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	3.55	0.84	3.79	0.87	-2.20	<.03
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	2.77	1.00	3.72	0.83	-8.20	<.01
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	2.83	0.95	3.63	0..70	-7.58	<.01
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	2.93	0.85	4.17	0.61	-13.32	<.01
	Educational Leadership						
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	3.14	0.99	3.65	0.77	-4.68	<.01
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	3.22	0.96	3.48	0.94	-2.20	0.03
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	2.91	1.10	3.40	0.92	-3.90	0.01
23-	I know little about the teaching program at this school.	2.70	1.10	3.15	1.07	-3.28	0.01
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	3.29	0.99	3.82	0.71	-4.87	<.01
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	3.97	0.64	4.28	0.55	-4.21	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	3.26	0.58	3.83	0.40	-9.34	<.01

Parents of grade one and two pupils considered the general goals to be clearer (1+), than did parents of kindergarten-prep. pupils. There was a perceived decreasing awareness of the key purposes of schooling being understood by students parents and community members (31+), from junior grades to senior grades. The variation between high school and primary school parent perception of the actual situation for item 8+, concerning parent school groups, is due to the relatively higher perception of the actual situation by parents of kindergarten-prep students. There is no significant variation between other groups.

Primary school parents' perceptions to items 5+, 11+, 17+ and 23+ were significantly higher than were high school parents' perceptions. This was caused by different perceptions between primary school parents and grade nine and ten parents rather, than all high school parents. Students study the Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) syllabuses, accredited by the Schools Board of Tasmania, for the first time in year nine. This is a marked change from junior high school and primary school experience and offers a possible explanation for this result. This result also indicates that parents want to be more fully informed of teaching practices and certification procedures than they were at the time of the survey.

Table 4.2.6
Teaching and Attainment Cluster of Preferences
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item	Statement	High		Primary			
No.	High Expectations Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	4.38	0.74	4.18	0.77	2.01	0.05
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	4.50	0.60	4.53	0.69	-.39	0.70
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	4.12	0.72	3.86	0.86	2.52	0.01
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	4.35	0.70	4.28	0.73	0.78	0.44
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	4.01	1.06	4.29	1.01	-2.02	0.04
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	4.35	0.71	4.36	0.77	-.13	0.90
	Student Progress Items						
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	4.43	0.54	4.42	0.66	0.20	0.84
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	4.22	0.62	4.24	0.68	-.240	0.81
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	4.20	0.64	4.14	0.70	0.76	0.45
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	4.32	0.56	4.12	0.74	2.28	0.02
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked	4.43	0.51	4.23	0.69	2.60	0.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.30	0.41	4.24	0.54	0.99	0.32

Within scale variation in the preference scale was highest for the Teaching and Attainment cluster (Table 4.2.6). High school parents' perceptions were significantly higher for items 3+, 15+, 24+ and 30+. They, therefore, considered it more important for high school students to be held to a high standard of work, to master subject matter at each grade level, for achievement to be systematically monitored and for students to be aware that their work will be regularly checked than primary school parents. The significantly lower mean for accomplishment and praise (Item 27-), is consistent with this pattern. Parents

view accomplishment and praise differently as their children advance through grades one to ten. Perceptions varied similarly for all other statements.

Minor within school variation was found for the Teaching and Attainment cluster or preferences. The means of parents of grade one and two students responses were higher than for parents of students in grades five and six with regard to the proposal that teachers consistently help students (9+). The importance of mastery of subject matter at each grade level (15+) was held by parents to be of higher priority for upper primary grades than lower primary grades. It was considered more important for teachers to use a variety of assessment methods (12+) in grade three and four than in kindergarten-prep. These results confirm the pattern that the higher the grade the more important assessment and achievement is to parents.

Table 4.2.7, below, reports perceptions of the actual situation with regard to the Teaching and Attainment Cluster of Preferences. Parents' perceptions were the same for items 15+, 18+ and 24+, indicating that parents considered there was no difference between expectations of subject matter being mastered at each grade level. It also indicated that their views about learning being assessed systematically and regularly were similar.

Table 4.2.7
Perceptions (Actual) of Teaching and Attainment Cluster
Leesville High and Leesville Primary
('a' Confirmed with Mann Whitney U Test)

Item No.	Statement	High		Primary			
	High Expectations Items	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	3.28	1.02	3.80	0.70	-4.78	<.01
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	3.44	0.97	4.00	0.71	-5.35	<.01
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	3.54	0.88	3.49	0.75	0.51	0.61
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	3.17	1.11	3.52	0.85	-2.77	0.01
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	2.87	1.09	3.83	1.11	-6.99	0.01
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	3.24	0.99	3.76	0.85	-4.52	<.01
	Student progress						
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	3.81	0.74	3.99	0.59	-2.24	0.03 a
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	3.68	0.66	3.88	0.59	-2.54	0.01
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	3.64	0.70	3.54	0.71	1.11	0.27
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	3.68	0.73	3.67	0.69	0.05	0.96
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	3.70	0.83	3.98	0.58	-3.20	<.01
	Mean	3.47	0.53	3.77	0.43	-5.12	<.01

With regard to item 15+, mastering subject matter at each grade level, perceptions of the actual situation was consistent from kindergarten to grade ten. The view that students were being challenged to their capacity was much stronger in junior primary school than in grade seven and eight and accounted for the between-school variation. Although there was between-school variation for monitoring achievement to keep track of students (6+), significant between-grade variation was not present. Between-school variation for item

12+, using different methods for assessment, was due to the different perceptions between grade one and two, and grade seven and eight parents.

Table 4.2.8 and Table 4.2.9 show that there was no significant within-scale variation found. Kindergarten-prep parents had weaker preferences with regard to a safe and orderly environment than all other groups. Apart from this similar preferences were expressed for all items. The perceptions of primary school parents were significantly higher for all items on the actual scale. Optional data supported this analysis. 30% of the negative comments from high school parents referred to rules and behaviour compared to 20% of primary school parents comments. Parents, then, viewed Leesville Primary School as a safer and more ordered place than Leesville High School.

Table 4.2.8
Safe and Orderly Environment Cluster of Preferences
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Item	Statement	High		Primary			
No.	Safe and Orderly Environment	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	4.60	0.53	4.51	0.71	0.98	0.33
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	4.49	0.58	4.42	0.76	0.77	0.44
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	4.39	0.64	4.10	0.80	3.06	0.01
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	4.47	0.61	4.39	0.79	0.95	0.34
28-	This is an unruly school.	4.31	0.88	4.37	0.81	-.58	0.56
33-	There is no sense of security and order at this school.	3.71	1.38	4.21	1.05	-3.03	0.01
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	3.92	1.14	4.14	0.91	-1.63	0.11
	$\bar{x}$	4.27	0.50	4.31	0.57	-0.52	0.60

Table 4.2.9
Safe and Orderly Environment Cluster of Perceptions
Leesville High and Leesville Primary
('a' Significant difference using Mann Whitney U test)

Item No.	Statement	High		Primary			
	Safe and Orderly Environment	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	3.49	1.05	4.18	0.71	-6.16	<.01
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	3.61	1.05	4.26	0.68	-5.84	<.01
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	2.92	1.17	3.67	0.82	-5.95	<.01
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	3.74	0.99	4.16	0.83	-3.74	0.05 a
28-	This is an unruly school.	3.48	1.04	4.26	0.76	-6.85	<.01
33-	There is no sense of security and order at this school.	3.48	1.04	4.26	0.76	-6.85	<.01
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	2.47	1.10	4.24	0.84	-6.37	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	3.41	0.81	4.12	0.54	-8.15	<.01

Table 4.2.10 provides the frequency of optional comments made by Leesville High and Leesville Primary School parents. There was overlap between the categories but the associated words illustrate the general meaning of each category. Some caution was required when interpreting the data as very general open questions were asked. Categories for responses were decided from the comments using a manual form of factor analysis, as explained in Chapter Three. There was a variation of approximately plus or minus 5% when the task of allocating comments to categories by an associate was repeated by the researcher. Provisional trust may be given to these data in Table 4.2.10.

Table 4.2.10
Responses to Open Questions
Leesville High and Leesville Primary

Category	High School				Primary School			
	+ve		-ve		+ve		-ve	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Principal & Teachers Service (caring, comradeship, encouraging, respect, co-operative, bond, humour, standards, marking, skills, students as individuals)	24	32	25	25	37	46	13	29
Curriculum Policies (choice, variety, life skills, basics)	16	21	20	20	18	22	11	25
Behaviour Management (safety, order, consistency, disruptive, fairness)	6	8	26	26	4	5	7	16
School Ethos (communication atmosphere, student progress, happiness, parent contact, reports	29	39	28	28	22	27	14	31
Total	75	100	99	99	81	100	45	101
External School Issues								
Government Funding			2				2	
Comments on Research	8		7		9		9	

There were more positive comments for the primary school (81) than the high school (75) and more than twice as many negative comments for the high school (99) than for the primary school (45). These patterns confirmed the interpretations made above of the quantitative data. Parents had a more positive opinion of Leesville Primary School than of Leesville High School.

Comments about teachers by parents varied from having a sense of humour, being caring and cooperative, to the converse of these. Encouraging and knowing the individual student were mentioned frequently. There were twice as many negative comments made

about high school teachers, many concerned with standards of work not being addressed. The frequency of responses that were in the Principals and Teachers Service category indicated that the perceived relationship of parents, between teacher, senior staff and their child was very important to how they view school effectiveness. This, again, provided support for the position indicated by factor analysis.

Comments from parents about Curriculum policies, both positive and negative, were in the main about choice, variety and options to suit individual abilities. The comments about 'back to basics', usually referring to learning tables, correct spelling, sitting at desks etc. can be regarded as the views of a minority.

The number of primary school parents' comments about behaviour, although fewer than the number of high school comments, mentioned bullying, bad language and playground supervision. High school comments were similar in nature although a lack of respect for authority and teachers was also mentioned. Again it can be inferred that how their child is treated by teachers and/or the senior staff is crucial to parents' perception, of school effectiveness.

Parents' comments about school ethos confirmed that parents considered there was a marked change once their child went to high school, with particular comments about the quality of relationships and school-home communication. Parents in general wanted to know quickly if there was a problem with their child, some commenting that their child

could not be expected to be a reliable conveyor of information. Some high school parents were concerned with lack of information about subjects, choices and standards. Comments were however, mainly about school uniform, updating equipment, ensuring adequate support staff, concern about government cutbacks and lockers for high school students. This suggested that Leesville High School leaders needed to review communication policies and the enactment of the policies.

Other comments reflected concern about resources, with particular reference to levels of government funding. The comments about the research were positive about the method but there were concerns expressed about the length of the questionnaire, the number of apparently repetitive questions and that some negative statements on the preference scale were difficult to answer. Overall, responses that related to external-to-school issues suggested that the recent reduction in education funding was not a popular decision with parents of school-aged children. The questionnaire, on balance, was positively received with the same problems being mentioned consistently.

4.3 Comparisons of High School - District High School - Primary School

This section reports a comparison of all high school, district high school and primary school responses following the pattern of the previous section. Leesville High and Leesville Primary data are included but a one fifth random sample of useable responses was taken for the percentage response table. This prevented the results being unduly

biased by Leesville school's data. There were approximately 160 useable responses from both Leesville High and Leesville Primary parents, that is, about five time as many as from parents of schools of comparable size selected in the statewide sample.

The variance of responses was much greater on the perception (does apply) scale between the types of schools. Tables 4.3.1, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3 report the percentages of support for items. There were consistent similarities in the pattern of responses from the statewide parents survey and the Leesville Schools parents.

The percentage of supportive responses to item 26+ (74%) indicated some ambivalence to the use of volunteers by high school parents. Supportive responses to item 27-(76%) concerning praise and accomplishment indicated that there was some support for the notion that the students who accomplish the most should be the only ones praised by parents of high school students.

Primary parents' responses to items on the preferred scale averaged in excess of 90% when all items were considered. Support for item 15+, mastery of subject matter at each grade level was low (80%) in comparison, a similar pattern to Leesville Primary parent responses. District High parents supported all statements on the preference scale with a mean of 91%.

Table 4.3.1
% Supportive Responses for Communication Cluster Items

Item No.	Statement	All High		All Primary		All District	
		% SA+A		% SA+A		% SA+A	
	Sense of Mission Items	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	95	73	96	84	98	70
13	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	93	68	93	80	96	62
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	95	50	95	73	94	41
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	93	54	92	71	86	44
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	95	65	96	77	96	65
	School Community Relationships Items						
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress.	94	63	97	81	96	67
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	94	55	95	74	92	71
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	84	40	92	74	81	52
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	91	42	94	56	92	48
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	74	41	90	90	85	84
	Educational Leadership Items						
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	92	52	91	64	85	52
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	92	51	94	60	92	40
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	86	40	94	64	92	46
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	91	54	94	69	90	52
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	97	90	98	93	96	90
	$\bar{x}$	91	56	94	74	91	59

Table 4.3.2
% Supportive Responses for Teaching and Attainment Cluster Items

Item No.	Statement	All High % SA+A		All Primary % SA+A		All District % SA+A	
	High Expectations Items	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	91	63	96	73	94	62
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	97	64	93	83	96	73
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	84	64	80	60	87	51
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	96	49	94	60	87	35
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	76	52	91	74	87	54
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasise success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	92	58	94	78	92	59
	Student Progress Items						
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	98	74	98	88	94	71
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	90	72	95	76	94	67
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	92	65	90	60	83	51
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	95	70	93	70	90	54
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked	95	75	96	77	92	62
	$\bar{x}$	91	64	93	73	91	63

High school parents supported eight of the items in the perception scale but were ambivalent about the remainder. Support was indicated for the general goals of high schools (1+ 10+ and 22+) but not for aims (19+) or clearly stated objectives (25+). There was comparatively high support (90%) for the availability of high school principals and senior staffs (34+). Mean support for items on the perception (does apply) scale was 60% when all 32 items were considered. Since 70% had been defined as politically significant support, it appeared that parents were giving ambivalent support to the situation they saw in high schools.

Table 4.3.3
% Supportive Responses for Safe and Orderly Environment Cluster Items

Item No.	Statement	All High		All Primary		All District	
		% SA +A		% SA +A		% SA +A	
	Safe and Orderly Environment Items	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.	Pref.	Act.
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	96	69	99	92	96	65
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	97	78	98	91	96	67
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	92	48	94	76	92	48
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	97	73	100	90	98	63
28-	This is an unruly school.	85	67	93	90	88	59
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	85	56	87	78	88	54
	$\bar{x}$	92	65	95	86	93	59

Four of the statements related to the content category Student Progress (Teaching and Attainment Cluster) were supported (6+, 12+, 24+ and 30+) with ambivalent support for a system to assess learning on a regular basis in high schools (18+). This means that high school parents consider that while students work is being marked and/or checked but it could be done more regularly.

Responses to the Safe and Orderly Environment cluster of items indicated high school parent support for items related to knowledge of codes of behaviour (4+, 10+ and 22+). There was, however, ambivalent support to whether or not high schools were unruly and discipline a problem (16+ and 28-).

Primary school parents supported 24 of the 32 statements on the actual scale, being ambivalent to the rest, with an average level of support of 76%, which was in excess of the 70% political benchmark. This means that, generally, parents supported the situation they saw in primary schools. Ambivalent support was indicated for feedback from parents (20+), senior staff initiating discussions relating to teaching and learning issues (5+, 11+ and 17+), subject mastery at each grade level (15+), students being challenged to their capacity (21+) and a system for assessing learning regularly (18+).

District high parents supported six items in the perception (does apply) scale, the lowest of the three types of schools, indicated ambivalent support to 25 statements with one statement unsupported. Average support for items was 59% which was below the 70% cut off point of political support. District high parents supported particular items as ideal; general goals being clear (1+), active parent school groups (8+), schools using parents and community volunteers (26+), teachers trying consistently to help students (9+), teachers monitoring achievement (6+) and principal and senior staff being available (34+).

The paired *t* test indicated a significant difference ($t = 1.65$, $p < .05$) between preferences and actuality for all items for the three types of schools except for the use of volunteers in primary schools and district high schools (Item 26+) ($t = 1.08$, $p = 0.28$). Although district high parents support for item 26+ was 85% on the preference scale and 84% on the perception (does apply) scale, both the *t* test and Wilcoxon signed rank test indicated

there was a significant difference between the means. Percentage preferences of 40% Agree and 44% Strongly Agree with only 57% Agree and 27% Strongly Agree on the perceptions scale helped identify the main source of difference. District high parents did not support as strongly the use of volunteers did as primary school parents.

As with Leesville schools, responses varied between parents associated with different types of schools. These differences are illustrated in Table 4.3.4 to Table 4.3.9 which are similar to Tables 4.2.4 to Table 4.2.9. Only the numbers of items are given for brevity and to facilitate comparisons between schools.

Parents' preferences concerning communication items, presented in Table 4.3.4 shown below, indicated that district high parents thought that volunteers should be used more in classrooms (26+) than did high school parents. No other significant difference was found. There were no significant differences between district high and primary school parent preferences. Primary school parents had significantly stronger preferences than high school parents for active parent-schools (8+), for more informal contacts between teachers and parents (14+), for the use of volunteers (26+) and for teaching methods to be explained to parents (17+). These results suggest, that apart from the four items mentioned, parent preferences with regard to communication items are the same no matter what the type of school.

Table 4.3.4
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Parents Preferences re Communication
(SOM= Sense of Mission, SCR= School Community Relationships
EL= Educational Leadership)

	Item No	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p	*t*	p	*t*	p
S O M	1+	4.42	0.54	4.34	0.67	4.36	0.61	0.91	0.36	0.88	0.38	-0.25	0.80
	13+	4.46	0.58	4.36	0.59	4.33	0.63	1.09	0.28	1.42	0.16	0.40	0.69
	19+	4.37	0.60	4.29	0.58	4.29	0.58	0.78	0.44	0.93	0.35	0.07	0.95
	25+	4.19	0.66	4.26	0.59	4.27	0.60	-0.71	0.48	-0.88	0.38	-0.13	0.90
	31+	4.46	0.64	4.32	0.69	4.38	0.60	1.24	0.21	0.88	0.38	-0.91	0.36
S C R	2+	4.46	0.73	4.45	0.70	4.50	0.64	0.09	0.93	-0.49	0.63	-0.83	0.41
	8+	4.50	0.75	4.32	0.58	4.47	0.63	1.71	0.09	0.32	0.75	-2.29	0.02
	14+	4.25	0.76	4.11	0.75	4.30	0.69	1.08	0.28	-0.43	0.67	-2.40	0.02
	20+	4.31	0.61	4.30	0.68	4.34	0.61	0.04	0.97	-0.30	0.76	-0.48	0.63
	26+	4.29	0.72	4.01	0.86	4.27	0.77	2.06	0.04	0.19	0.85	-3.07	<0.01
E L	5+	4.28	0.72	4.23	0.69	4.35	0.69	0.49	0.62	-0.61	0.54	-1.63	0.10
	11+	4.40	0.63	4.31	0.78	4.37	0.63	0.74	0.46	0.31	0.75	-0.84	0.40
	17+	4.25	0.71	4.15	0.76	4.33	0.64	0.82	0.41	-0.82	0.41	-2.51	0.01
	29+	4.39	0.66	4.31	0.74	4.40	0.66	0.66	0.51	-0.18	0.86	-1.33	0.18
	34+	4.56	0.64	4.55	0.58	4.50	0.62	0.04	0.97	0.58	0.56	0.77	0.44
	$\bar{x}$	4.38	0.45	4.25	0.43	4.32	0.45	1.98	0.05	0.85	0.40	-2.09	0.04

The means of district high parents' views of actual communication, as presented in Table 4.3.5 below, are significantly lower than primary school parent responses except for three statements. Responses for active parent-school groups(8+), the use of volunteers (26+) and availability of principal and senior staff (34+) were seen as similar. High school parent responses were significantly lower than primary school parent responses for all statements except for the availability of principal and senior staff (34+).

Table 4.3.5
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Actual Responses
re Communication Cluster
(SOM= Sense of Mission, SCR= School Community Relationships
EL= Educational Leadership)

	Item No.	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p	t	p	t	p
S O M	1+	3.58	0.94	3.79	0.76	3.99	0.83	-1.58	0.12	-3.51	<0.01	-2.53	0.01
	13+	3.46	1.13	3.78	0.83	4.00	0.74	-2.23	0.03	-4.90	<0.01	-2.88	<0.01
	19+	3.07	1.08	3.44	0.93	3.77	0.88	-2.40	0.02	-5.57	<0.01	-3.70	<0.01
	25+	3.25	0.98	3.62	0.79	3.79	0.83	-2.76	<0.01	-4.67	<0.01	-2.17	0.03
	31+	3.46	0.96	3.61	0.95	3.88	0.81	-1.01	0.31	-3.67	<0.01	-3.174	<0.01
S C R	2+	3.48	1.20	3.59	1.12	3.93	1.05	-0.67	0.50	-3.09	<0.01	-3.09	<0.01
	8+	3.68	1.15	3.50	1.04	3.83	1.01	1.13	0.26	-1.06	0.29	-3.27	<0.01
	14+	3.37	1.18	3.20	1.15	3.83	1.06	0.91	0.36	-3.18	<0.01	-5.77	<0.01
	20+	3.03	1.24	3.21	1.08	3.51	1.07	-1.03	0.31	-3.18	<0.01	-2.74	0.01
	26+	4.06	0.76	3.40	1.04	4.18	0.75	4.51	<0.01	-1.18	0.24	-9.37	<0.01
E L	5+	3.16	1.15	3.34	1.09	3.67	1.00	-1.04	0.30	-3.70	<0.01	-3.28	<0.01
	11+	3.03	1.11	3.31	1.14	3.55	1.09	-1.63	0.11	-3.52	<0.01	-2.20	0.03
	17+	3.08	1.14	3.22	1.02	3.51	1.09	-.088	0.38	-2.91	<0.01	-2.71	<0.01
	29+	3.19	1.14	3.46	1.02	3.75	0.97	-1.66	0.10	-4.16	<0.01	-3.00	<0.01
	34+	4.10	0.78	4.32	0.65	4.28	0.73	-2.11	0.04	-1.80	0.07	0.61	0.54
	$\bar{x}$	3.40	0.72	3.39	0.62	3.83	0.56	0.18	0.86	-5.58	<0.01	-10.34	<0.01

High school parents had significantly stronger opinions of the actual situation than district high school parents on five of the communication items. They considered that decisions reflected the general goals (13+), the use of volunteers (26+), the aims were more widely understood (19+), that sets of objectives were more clearly stated (25+) and that the principal and senior staff were more available (34+) than did district high parents perceive to be the case. No other significant differences were found.

These patterns suggested that reasons other than general organisational norms related to relationships were at work in district high schools. This point is taken up again below.

Table 4.3.6, below, provides parents' preferences on Teaching and Attainment items. It indicated differences between how high and primary school parents view the use of praise (27-). No other significant differences were identified in this cluster of items.

Table 4.3.6
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Parents' Preferences re Teaching and Attainment Cluster
(HE= High Expectations and SP= Student Progress)

	Item No	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p	*t*	p	*t*	p
HE	3+	4.51	0.67	4.45	0.76	4.40	0.63	0.60	0.55	1.19	0.23	0.56	0.57
	9+	4.65	0.62	4.57	0.59	4.64	0.56	0.84	0.40	0.19	0.85	-1.11	0.27
	15+	4.29	0.80	4.18	0.79	4.08	0.88	0.81	0.42	1.64	0.10	1.17	0.24
	21+	4.23	0.78	4.49	0.56	4.43	0.65	-2.43	0.02	-2.02	0.04	0.79	0.43
	27-	4.23	0.96	3.98	1.21	4.46	0.84	1.34	0.18	-1.76	0.08	-4.71	<0.01
	32+	4.44	0.75	4.50	0.63	4.48	0.70	-.056	0.58	-0.40	0.69	0.27	0.79
SP	6+	4.52	0.61	4.62	0.58	4.55	0.61	-0.99	0.32	-0.32	0.75	1.07	0.28
	12+	4.39	0.66	4.38	0.68	4.40	0.65	0.01	0.99	-0.15	0.88	-0.23	0.82
	18+	4.19	0.77	4.28	0.61	4.28	0.62	-0.76	0.45	-0.87	0.39	-0.01	0.99
	24+	4.35	0.65	4.38	0.61	4.34	0.66	-0.36	0.72	0.09	0.93	0.67	0.51
	30+	4.39	0.63	4.39	0.63	4.38	0.59	-0.07	0.95	0.04	0.97	0.17	0.86
	$\bar{x}$	4.38	0.48	4.34	0.43	4.36	0.43	0.68	0.50	0.33	0.74	-0.73	0.46

Parents' perceptions of the actual situation with regard to Teaching and Attainment items, illustrated in Table 4.3.7 below, varied markedly between schools. District high parents' responses were significantly lower than primary parent responses for all statements except for mastery at each year level (15+). District high parent responses were significantly lower on this statement than high school parent responses.

High school parent responses were higher for four of the five student progress statements compared to the actual situation as perceived by district high parents. This meant that high school parents considered that different methods of assessment were used (12+) more, were more positive about there being a system for assessment (18+), that progress was more systematically monitored (24+) and students were more aware their work was regularly checked (30+) than did district high parents. Again, this anomaly appears unrelated to the different organisational patterns in primary and high schools.

Table 4.3.7
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Parents' Perceptions of Teaching and Attainment
(HE= High Expectations and SP= Student Progress)

	Item No	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p	*t*	p	*t*	p
	3+	3.38	1.21	3.56	1.05	3.81	0.92	-1.08	0.28	-3.28	<0.01	-2.61	0.01
	9+	3.59	1.12	3.77	0.99	4.10	0.90	-1.16	0.25	-4.01	<0.01	-3.59	<0.01
H	15+	3.27	1.08	3.61	0.96	3.47	0.97	-2.22	0.03	-1.50	0.13	1.42	0.16
E	21+	2.98	1.16	3.27	1.09	3.56	1.06	-1.67	0.10	-3.93	<0.01	-2.72	0.01
	27-	3.35	1.23	3.42	1.20	3.90	1.12	-0.36	0.72	-3.57	<0.01	-4.27	<0.01
	32+	3.44	1.12	3.71	0.91	3.97	0.89	-1.79	0.08	-4.15	<0.01	-2.86	<0.01
	6+	3.64	1.01	3.86	0.86	4.12	0.70	-1.64	0.10	-4.77	<0.01	-3.42	<0.01
S	12+	3.64	0.90	3.91	0.79	3.94	0.78	-2.17	0.03	-2.79	0.01	-0.38	0.71
P	18+	3.27	1.02	3.70	0.87	3.60	0.87	-3.02	<0.01	-2.71	0.01	1.14	0.25
	24+	3.41	0.98	3.84	0.81	3.77	0.80	-3.23	<0.01	-3.20	<0.01	0.88	0.38
	30+	3.44	1.04	3.84	0.90	3.86	0.84	-2.73	0.01	-3.52	<0.01	-0.22	0.83
	$\bar{x}$	3.40	0.69	3.57	0.58	3.81	0.57	-2.00	0.05	-5.30	<0.01	-5.73	<0.01

High school parents' responses were significantly lower than primary parents' responses for statements relating to expectations (3+, 9+, 21+, 27- and 32+), and monitoring student progress (6+). This repeats the Leesville patterns. Again the major and significant differences are between types of schools.

Preferences concerning Safe and Orderly Environment Scale-Preferred, presented in Table 4.3.8 below, indicated no significant differences between district and high school parents. Primary school parents exhibited significantly stronger preferences for students viewing the school as safe and secure (4+), the school not being unruly (28-) and learning not being disrupted (35-).

Table 4.3.8
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Preferences for a Safe and Orderly Environment

	Item No.	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	*t*	p	*t*	p	*t*	p
S O E	4+	4.67	0.71	4.46	0.74	4.65	0.53	1.73	0.08	0.27	0.79	-2.94	0.03
	10+	4.64	0.63	4.55	0.59	4.55	0.55	0.89	0.37	0.98	0.33	-0.12	0.91
	16+	4.40	0.82	4.28	0.82	4.38	0.63	0.90	0.37	0.23	0.82	-1.36	0.17
	22+	4.67	0.59	4.51	0.62	4.63	0.49	1.59	0.11	0.55	0.58	-2.11	0.04
	28-	4.54	0.92	4.34	1.08	4.61	0.80	1.17	0.24	-0.61	0.55	-2.89	<0.01
	35-	4.29	1.00	4.10	1.14	4.32	0.92	1.04	0.30	-0.23	0.82	-2.11	0.04
	$\bar{x}$	4.54	0.48	4.37	0.49	4.47	0.44	2.23	0.03	0.93	0.35	-2.85	<0.01

Primary school parents' responses concerning SOE items were significantly higher than for district and high parents' responses for all statements. Table 4.3.9, below, also shows that high school parents responded significantly higher on four out of the seven statements compared to district high parents. This means that high school parents perceived that codes of behaviour (10+ and 22+) were better known than district high parents. Similarly high school parents did not see their schools being as unruly (28-) or as disrupted (35-) as did district high parents.

Table 4.3.9
Comparison of High, District High and Primary Actual Responses
re Safe and Orderly Environment Cluster
(SOE= Safe and Orderly Environment)

	Item No.	District High		High		Primary		District High c.f. High		District High c.f. Primary		High c.f. Primary	
		$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD	t	p	t	p	t	p
S O E	4+	3.56	1.22	3.73	0.94	4.29	0.74	-1.13	0.26	-6.59	<0.01	-7.01	<0.01
	10+	3.64	1.30	3.98	0.90	4.25	0.77	-2.15	0.03	-5.28	<0.01	-3.42	<0.01
	16+	2.94	1.38	3.25	1.06	3.77	1.03	-1.77	0.08	-5.68	<0.01	-5.04	<0.01
	22+	3.57	1.36	3.95	0.97	4.25	0.82	-2.22	0.03	-5.53	<0.01	-3.58	<0.01
	28-	3.57	1.45	4.01	1.12	4.44	0.87	-2.31	0.02	-6.59	<0.01	-4.60	<0.01
	33-	3.65	1.31	4.07	1.14	4.42	0.91	-2.32	0.02	-5.81	<0.01	-3.56	<0.01
	35-	3.29	1.36	3.54	1.12	4.01	1.05	-1.39	0.17	-4.90	<0.01	-4.44	<0.01
	$\bar{x}$	3.42	1.03	3.58	0.80	4.15	0.61	-1.26	0.21	-8.17	<0.01	-11.27	<0.01

The analysis of respondents' optional comments, from the statewide sample, indicated that it was appropriate to use a similar table for reporting as had been used to report Leesville School parents' optional comments. The three types of schools were shown in the one table to allow for comparisons. Categories were adapted from Table 4.2.10. Ratios were obtained by dividing the total number of positive comments by the total number of negative comments for each school. The ratio for district high schools was 0.71:1, .092:1 for high schools and 1.4:1 for primary schools. This found the same pattern noted above, that is, primary parents' responses were more positive than either of the other two categories, and, in general, high school parents' responses were more positive than district high parents' responses. Again caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the data, as explained in section 4.1, but these patterns persisted throughout the analysis and may be used to assist interpretation.

Table 4.3.10
Analysis of Optional Comments from the Statewide Sample

	District High				High School				Primary School			
Category	+ve		-ve		+ve		-ve		+ve		-ve	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Principal & Teachers Service	12	25	14	21	41	40	36	28	140	35	83	29
Curriculum Policies	9	19	21	31	23	19	41	32	57	13	94	33
Behaviour Management	5	10	23	34	11	9	23	18	31	18	51	18
School Ethos	22	46	10	15	37	31	27	21	174	42	57	20
Total	48	100	67	101	118	99	127	99	397	99	285	100
External School Issues Government Funding			6				14				31	
Comments on research	6		6		11		12		31		42	

District high parents' positive comments concerning principals and teachers was 25% compared to 35% and 39% for primary and high school parents respectively. District high parents also made (relatively) the lowest number of negative comments about principals and teachers. When the high number of negative comments about behaviour management is considered this figure is explained. Many negative behaviour management comments referred to teachers' lack of classroom discipline in district high schools. This was regarded as a vital clue concerning the district high anomalies noted above. This clue will be picked up below.

Negative curriculum comments were divided between not enough choice and variety and 'back to basic' comments. Positive curriculum comments were almost exclusively about variety, depth and relevance. Some positive general comments were about student

progress. This may have meant progress in basic numeracy and literacy. Again some caution is required because of the very general nature of the questions.

Primary schools surveyed varied in size from 20 to 650 students. Parents of small schools made more positive comments about small class sizes, using reference to 'everyone knowing one another' and the perceived friendly atmosphere, than did the parents of large primary schools. Parents in larger school made more positive comments about variety and depth in the curriculum, and there were relatively more positive comments about the principal and senior staff. There were a greater number of negative behaviour comments from parents of larger primary schools but the majority of these concerned playground behaviour rather than in-class behaviour.

High and district high school parents' comments reflected a greater concern for achievement and knowledge about student progress. A large number of negative comments about behaviour from these parents were about a minority disrupting classes and preventing the majority from learning.

Again, with reference to the district high anomalies noted above, many district and rural primary school parents' negative comments referred to the number of young, inexperienced and transient teachers that worked in their schools. This apparently very important matter will be discussed further in the next chapter.

4.4 Size

This section reports results of investigations into the relationship between parents' perceptions and the size of school. Types of schools were examined separately with schools divided into the following categories, primary schools <250 or >250, high schools <550 or >550 and district high schools <250 or >250. Means ($\bar{x}$) and significance of difference (p) between means were calculated using unpaired *t* tests. Percentage responses are not reported as this was an investigation to report differences. Tables 4.4.1 to 4.4.3 present primary parents' responses, Tables 4.4.4 to 4.4.6 present high school parents' responses and Tables 4.4.7 to 4.4.9 present district high school parent responses. Preferences and views of the actual situation are provided on the same table.

Parents of smaller primary schools had higher expectations on seven statements concerned with communication, (see Table 4.4.1). Responses had significantly higher means than did larger school parents' responses. Parents of smaller schools had stronger preferences for clear goals (1+), and active parent -school group (8+) encouraging feedback from parents (20+). Similarly, parents of smaller schools considered it more important that the principal and senior staff discuss teaching and learning (5+, 11+ and 29+) and be available for discussions (34+).

Parents in smaller schools saw the actual situation very differently than parents from larger primary schools. They reported that goals and aims were not as clear (1+, 19+),

teachers didn't use phone calls etc. (2+) as much, parent school groups were not as active (8+) and there wasn't as much encouragement of feedback from parents (20+).

Table 4.4.1
Differences on Communication Items (Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership) in Primary School by Size

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Sense of Mission Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	*t*	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	*t*	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	4.42	4.27	2.20	0.03	3.87	4.58	-2.79	0.01
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	4.33	4.28	0.72	0.47	3.97	3.99	-0.22	0.82
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	4.30	4.26	0.71	0.48	3.58	3.89	-3.90	<.01
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	4.27	4.23	0.69	0.49	3.72	3.81	-1.27	0.20
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	4.38	4.30	1.24	0.22	3.81	3.90	-1.22	0.22
	School Community Relationships Items								
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	4.55	4.43	1.87	0.07	3.81	4.01	-2.20	0.03
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	4.55	4.35	2.85	<.01	3.62	3.92	-3.27	<.01
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	4.24	4.24	0.09	0.92	3.72	3.85	-1.37	0.17
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	4.41	4.20	3.23	<.01	3.40	3.60	-2.15	0.03
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	4.23	4.23	-.004	0.99	4.10	4.22	-1.78	0.08
	Educational Leadership Items								
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	4.46	4.21	3.50	<.01	3.64	3.68	-.36	0.72
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	4.40	4.24	2.27	0.02	3.62	3.49	1.35	0.18
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	4.34	4.28	0.94	0.35	3.47	3.49	-0.22	0.82
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	4.46	4.31	2.07	0.04	3.70	3.80	-1.14	0.26
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	4.58	4.43	2.32	0.02	4.28	4.28	0.05	0.96
	$\bar{x}$	4.40	4.28	2.75	0.01	3.75	3.87	-2.14	0.03

Parents of smaller schools responded higher to three statements on the preferred scale for Teaching and Attainment, as indicated in Table 4.4.2 below, but there were no other significant differences on either the preference (should apply) or perception (does apply) scales. They considered teachers trying consistently to help students (9+), all students having success highlighted (32+) and that there be a system for assessing learning (18+) more important than did parents of students in larger primary schools.

Responses to Safe and Orderly Environment statements, as displayed in Table 4.3.3 below, show that smaller school parents had stronger opinions about the school being safe and secure (4+) and that discipline should not be a problem (16+) but there were no other significant differences in preferences. Smaller school parents considered that schools were actually safer and more secure (4+) but didn't consider that codes of behaviour were actually as well known (16+) as larger primary school parents. Some optional comments from parents of larger schools specifically referred to 'rough play' in playgrounds while considering in-class behaviour acceptable. This suggests that larger primary schools may need to examine their Safe and Orderly Environment policies with regard to playground behaviour.

In summary, where parents of children in smaller primary schools tended to have stronger opinions of what should happen, they did not rate their schools as highly as did parents of larger primary schools on almost all statements.

Table 4.4.2
Differences on Teaching and Attainment Items (High Expectations and Students Progress) in Primary Schools by Size

	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
Item No	High Expectations Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	4.43	4.31	1.68	0.09	3.86	3.78	0.95	0.34
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	4.69	4.57	1.97	0.05	4.13	4.05	1.09	0.28
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	4.05	4.01	0.47	0.64	3.55	3.44	1.34	0.18
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	4.42	4.38	0.56	0.58	3.54	3.55	-0.17	0.96
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	4.49	4.38	1.28	0.20	3.90	3.88	0.15	0.88
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	4.56	4.40	2.07	0.04	3.99	3.88	1.31	0.19
	Student Progress Items								
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	4.54	4.51	0.48	0.63	4.05	4.11	-0.88	0.38
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	4.40	4.34	0.89	0.37	3.90	3.94	-0.62	0.53
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	4.34	4.20	2.10	0.04	3.54	3.61	-0.90	0.37
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	4.36	4.25	1.69	0.09	3.75	3.74	0.10	0.92
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	4.39	4.32	1.18	0.24	3.90	3.89	0.13	0.90
	$\bar{x}$	4.43	4.33	2.16	0.03	3.83	3.81	0.43	0.67

Table 4.4.3
Differences on Safe and Orderly Environment Items in Primary Schools by Size

	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
Item No	Safe and Orderly Environment Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place	4.73	4.56	2.67	0.01	4.44	4.18	3.83	<.01
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school	4.56	4.50	0.82	0.36	4.13	4.34	-2.68	0.01
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	4.41	4.26	2.17	0.03	3.86	3.69	1.91	0.06
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	4.62	4.55	1.26	0.21	4.22	4.24	-0.31	0.76
28-	This is an unruly school.	4.61	4.53	1.00	0.32	4.49	4.35	1.71	0.09
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	4.31	4.26	0.55	0.58	4.01	4.02	-0.12	0.90
	$\bar{x}$	4.54	4.44	2.13	0.03	4.19	4.13	1.01	0.31

No significant differences were found between high school parents' preferences concerning communication items, as shown in Table 4.4.4 below. Parents of larger high schools considered that decisions actually reflected goals more (13+), teachers used various methods to contact parents (2+), there were more informal contacts between teachers and parents (14+) and the principal and senior staff were more available (34+) than did parents of smaller high schools. Parents of small high schools, however, considered there were actually more active parent school groups (8+) than did parents of larger high schools. The patterns hint at greater organisational flexibility in larger schools and at greater openness to parent participation in smaller schools.

Parents of children in larger high schools expressed stronger preferences on four items concerned with Teaching and Attainment, as indicated in Table 4.4.5 below. Three of them concerned the assessment of learning (6+, 12+ and 18+) the other concerning the use of praise (27-). There were marked differences concerning perceptions of the actual situation with seven of the 11 items having significantly higher means recorded by parents of larger high schools. They indicated more strongly that student work was systematically marked on a regular basis (6+, 12+, 18+ and 24+) and that teachers in larger high schools try more consistently to help students (9+). They also had more positive opinions about how praise was actually used (27-) and how students were treated with regard to failures and shortcomings (32+). These patterns suggest teachers supervise learning more effectively in larger schools.

Table 4.4.4
Differences on Communication Items (Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership) in High Schools by Size

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Sense of Mission Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	4.28	4.45	-1.66	0.10	3.55	3.78	-1.65	0.10
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	4.25	4.33	-0.79	0.43	3.60	3.89	-2.44	0.02
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	4.28	4.37	-0.96	0.34	3.28	3.46	-1.23	0.22
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	4.21	4.27	-0.74	0.46	3.42	3.59	-1.36	0.18
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	4.31	4.35	-0.44	0.66	3.55	3.64	-0.65	0.52
	School Community Relationships Items								
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	4.40	4.41	-0.12	0.90	3.33	3.66	-1.97	0.05
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	4.25	4.28	-0.28	0.78	3.59	3.27	2.31	0.02
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	4.06	4.14	-0.70	0.48	2.91	3.25	-2.06	0.04
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	4.19	4.33	-1.41	0.16	3.01	3.04	-0.20	0.84
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	3.88	4.02	-0.95	0.34	3.14	3.21	-0.48	0.62
	Educational Leadership Items								
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	4.30	4.26	0.45	0.65	3.23	3.23	0.03	0.97
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	4.25	4.29	-0.44	0.66	3.28	3.20	0.52	0.60
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	4.16	4.14	0.23	0.82	3.03	3.18	-0.88	0.38
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	4.17	4.33	-1.45	0.15	3.32	3.59	-1.79	0.07
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	4.46	4.63	-1.87	0.06	4.06	4.45	-3.90	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.23	4.32	-1.30	0.19	3.36	3.50	-1.50	0.13

Table 4.4.5
Differences on Teaching and Attainment Items (High Expectations and Students Progress) in High Schools by Size.

	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
Item No	High Expectations Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	4.39	4.49	-0.85	0.40	3.39	3.50	-0.68	0.50
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	4.51	4.63	-1.28	0.20	3.53	3.89	-2.45	0.01
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	4.16	4.12	0.35	0.73	3.55	3.66	-0.80	0.45
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	4.38	4.57	-1.89	0.06	3.24	3.13	0.73	0.47
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	3.91	4.29	-2.14	0.03	3.00	3.71	-4.20	<.01
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	4.41	4.51	-0.98	0.33	3.40	3.73	-2.23	0.03
	Student Progress Items								
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	4.47	4.71	-2.68	0.01	3.77	4.07	-2.47	0.01
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	4.25	4.51	-2.61	0.01	3.73	4.03	-2.80	0.01
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	4.19	4.39	-2.00	0.05	3.59	3.96	-3.14	<.01
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	4.32	4.45	-1.40	0.16	3.67	4.09	-3.68	<.01
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	4.38	4.53	-1.63	0.10	3.72	3.96	-1.86	0.06
	$\bar{x}$	4.30	4.47	-2.54	0.01	3.51	3.80	-3.29	<.01

A similar pattern was found for the Safe and Orderly Environment cluster of items, as shown in Table 4.4.6 below. Parents of larger high schools had significantly stronger preferences than smaller high school parents about the unruliness of their schools (28-), a sense of security and order (33-) and about disruptions to learning (35-). Larger school parents responded more favourably to five of the six items on the 'does apply' scale. They considered that there were better known codes of behaviour and rules (10+ and 22+), discipline not as much of a problem (16+), that schools were not as unruly (28-),

they had a greater sense of order and security (33-) and they were not disrupted as much (35-), when compared to smaller high schools parent responses. This could mean that smaller schools rely more on interpersonal norms than on formal structures.

Table 4.4.6
Differences on Safe and Orderly Environment Items in High Schools by Size

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Safe and Orderly Environment Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	*t*	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	*t*	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	4.53	4.55	-0.22	0.82	3.57	3.79	-1.46	0.15
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	4.48	4.63	-1.56	0.12	3.71	4.13	-2.85	<.01
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	4.31	4.45	-1.26	0.21	2.92	3.71	-4.92	<.01
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	4.46	4.63	-1.71	0.09	3.77	4.11	-2.29	0.02
28-	This is an unruly school.	4.25	4.61	-2.34	0.02	3.58	4.34	-4.69	<.01
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	3.92	4.35	-2.43	0.02	3.25	3.88	-3.80	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.33	4.54	-2.75	0.01	3.47	3.99	-4.53	<.01

District high school parents' responses are shown in Table 4.4.7 to Table 4.4.9 below. These results should be viewed with some caution as there was only one school in the <250 category and 2 in the >250 category. Nevertheless results show similarities to high school and primary school patterns of responses.

The data summarised in Table 4.4.7 indicate that there were six communication items (13+, 19+, 14+, 20+, 29+ and 34+) where smaller district high school parents' preferences (like primary school parents) were significantly higher than in larger schools. Parents of larger district high schools saw the actual situation to do with items 19+, 26+ and 17+ in significantly better terms, a similar pattern to primary and high school parents. These

patterns confirm that parents of smaller schools have stronger preferences but do not consider the actual situation as favourably as do parents of larger schools. Again this suggests that the explicit organisation in larger schools gives better expression to parents' preferences.

Table 4.4.7
Differences on Communication Items (Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership) in District High Schools by Size

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Sense of Mission Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	4.47	4.33	0.83	0.51	3.47	3.83	-1.35	0.18
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	4.58	4.20	2.24	0.03	3.39	3.67	-0.88	0.38
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	4.50	4.13	2.17	0.03	2.84	3.67	-2.86	0.01
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	4.27	4.00	1.37	0.17	3.21	3.39	-0.66	0.51
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	4.58	4.26	1.72	0.09	3.41	3.61	-0.74	0.46
	School Community Relationships Items								
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	4.47	4.40	-0.32	0.75	3.45	3.50	-0.13	0.89
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	4.63	4.20	1.93	0.06	3.84	3.28	1.77	0.08
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	4.40	3.87	2.43	0.02	3.34	3.50	0.48	0.63
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	4.47	3.93	3.08	<.01	2.96	3.22	-0.76	0.45
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	4.39	4.07	1.45	0.15	4.23	3.72	2.50	0.01
	Educational Leadership Items								
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	4.31	4.28	0.17	0.86	3.00	3.56	-1.74	0.09
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	4.50	4.20	1.55	0.13	2.86	3.44	-1.90	0.06
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	4.33	4.07	1.22	0.23	2.89	3.50	-1.96	0.05
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	4.61	3.87	4.20	<.01	3.07	3.44	-1.17	0.25
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	4.69	4.27	2.26	0.03	4.00	4.33	-1.54	0.13
	$\bar{x}$	4.49	4.14	2.79	0.01	3.33	3.58	-1.23	0.22

District high parents' responses to Teaching and Attainment items, summarised in Table 4.4.8, below, showed little difference in preferences or in views of the actual situation with regard to size. The way students were treated with regard to failures etc. (32+) was considered significantly more important by parents of smaller schools. Parents of larger district high schools considered students were actually challenged to their capacity (21+) and students were praised more with regard to accomplishment (27-) than in smaller schools. There were no other significant differences.

Table 4.4.8
Differences on Teaching and Attainment Items (High Expectations and Students Progress) in District High Schools by Size.

	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
Item No	High Expectations Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	4.61	4.27	1.69	0.10	3.22	3.78	-1.64	0.10
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	4.72	4.47	1.34	0.18	3.57	3.61	-0.14	0.89
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	4.42	4.00	1.71	0.09	3.07	3.78	-2.42	0.02
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	4.33	4.00	1.39	0.17	2.75	3.56	-2.58	0.01
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	4.19	4.33	-0.46	0.64	3.09	4.00	-2.75	0.01
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	4.58	4.13	1.99	0.05	3.29	3.83	-1.74	0.09
	Student Progress Items								
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	4.58	4.40	-0.98	0.33	3.54	3.83	-1.02	0.31
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	4.44	4.27	0.87	0.39	3.50	3.94	-1.78	0.08
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	4.25	4.07	0.77	0.45	3.11	3.61	-1.77	0.08
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	4.39	4.27	0.60	0.55	3.27	3.77	-1.87	0.06
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	4.44	4.27	0.91	0.36	3.59	3.17	1.48	0.14
	$\bar{x}$	4.45	4.22	1.56	0.12	3.28	3.72	-2.33	0.02

No significant differences were found in preferences with regard to Safe and Orderly Environment items as shown in Table 4.4.9. The actual situation, however was seen by parents of the larger district high schools to be significantly higher with respect to items 10+, 16+, 22+, 28- and 35-.

Table 4.4.9
Differences on Safe and Orderly Environment Items in District High Schools by Size

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Safe and Orderly Environment Items	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p	<250 $\bar{x}$	>250 $\bar{x}$	t	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	4.78	4.40	1.76	0.08	3.46	3.78	-0.94	0.35
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	4.64	4.60	0.20	0.84	3.27	4.44	-3.52	<.01
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	4.53	4.13	1.57	0.12	2.64	3.61	-2.64	0.01
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	4.69	4.60	0.52	0.61	3.34	4.17	-2.22	0.03
28-	This is an unruly school.	4.64	4.27	1.32	0.19	3.25	4.33	-2.78	0.01
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	4.25	4.40	-0.48	0.63	3.05	3.83	-2.12	0.04
	$\bar{x}$	4.58	4.40	1.26	0.21	3.17	4.03	-3.17	<.01

To summarise, parents of smaller primary and district high schools had stronger opinions about what should happen in schools, while the opposite appeared to apply in high schools. Except for two statements (4+ and 26+) responses indicated a more positive opinion of what actually happened in schools from parents of larger schools no matter what the school type pointing to the value of relating explicit structures to parents'

preferences. This pattern could also relate to the greater transparency in smaller schools and the converse in larger schools, irrespective of type. Generally small schools are in rural and/or isolated areas which are often considered 'non-preferred' by teachers. Larger schools are generally in preferred urban locations. The most experienced teachers are more likely to be in the preferred locations. A typical career strategy for teachers is to 'do their time' in non-preferred areas before moving to the more preferred locations. The variation in perception reported in this section could also be related to the standard of teaching in preferred and non-preferred areas and to the extent to which structures reflect parents' preferences.

4.5 Urban - Rural Schools

This section is a report of comparisons made between the perceptions of urban and rural school parents. Urban schools were those that were in Hobart or Launceston and their immediate surrounds and towns from Wynyard to Latrobe inclusive on the North West Coast of Tasmania (DEA 1994 b). Tables 4.5.1 to 4.5.3 below compare the findings.

There was no distinction made between type of school as in previous sections. Caution needs to be exercised with interpretation because of this aggregation. All district high schools were classed as rural schools. Analysis detailed in Section 4.2 indicated that district high school parents perceived the actual situation to be less favourable than did primary school parents and generally less favourable than did high school parents. Section 4.3 indicated that parents of smaller schools generally perceived the actual situation less

favourably than did parents of larger schools. Smaller schools were usually rural schools. Extrapolating from previous sections then, it was predicted that parents of rural schools would perceive the actual situation considerably less favourable than urban parents. It was also predicted that urban parents would have stronger preferences than would rural parents. Both predictions were sustained.

Nine statements on the preference scale indicated stronger opinions by urban parents about what should happen in schools. Urban parent responses concerning the actual situation indicated that they had more favourable opinions on 31 of the 33 statements than did rural parents.

On the communication scale (Table 4.5.1) urban parents considered informal contacts (14+) and the principal and senior staff leading discussions about teaching and learning (11+ and 29+) to be more important than did rural parents. Urban parents had stronger preferences for students being challenged to capacity (21+), praise of students (27-) and monitoring achievement on the Teaching and Attainment scale (see Table 4.5.2 below). They also felt more strongly about what should happen with regard to behaviour rules (22+), security and order (33-) and learning being disrupted (35-) on the Safe and Orderly Environment scale (Table 4.5.3 below).

Table 4.5.1
Differences on Communication Items (Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership) in All Schools by Location

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Sense of Mission Items	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p
1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	4.35	4.30	0.97	0.33	3.96	3.74	3.73	<.01
13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school.	4.32	4.29	0.63	0.53	3.94	3.75	3.43	<.01
19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	4.25	4.31	-1.23	0.23	3.73	3.45	4.25	<.01
25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	4.25	4.22	0.67	0.50	3.75	3.54	3.64	<.01
31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling.	4.34	4.32	0.39	0.69	3.83	3.67	2.64	0.01
	School Community Relationships Items								
2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress	4.47	4.41	1.17	0.24	3.89	3.60	3.89	<.01
8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved.	4.39	4.34	1.06	0.29	3.74	3.69	0.68	0.49
14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents.	4.25	4.11	2.63	0.01	3.67	3.35	4.20	<.01
20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	4.30	4.21	1.90	0.06	3.48	3.20	3.91	<.01
26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	4.18	4.07	1.74	0.08	3.94	3.75	2.89	<.01
	Educational Leadership Items								
5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and student.	4.28	4.30	-0.45	0.65	3.61	3.39	3.21	<.01
11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion.	4.34	4.24	1.92	0.05	3.49	3.34	2.17	0.03
17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	4.26	4.23	0.48	0.63	3.49	3.17	4.42	<.01
29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	4.36	4.26	1.96	0.05	3.69	3.52	2.53	0.01
34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching.	4.49	4.48	0.21	0.83	4.29	4.16	2.58	0.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.33	4.28	1.45	0.14	3.77	3.56	4.94	<.01

Statement 8+ (Table 4.5.1), concerning active school parent groups and statement 15+ (see Table 4.5.2.), mastery at each grade level, were the only statements for which no significant difference responses between urban and rural parents were indicated. Urban parent responses were higher for all other statements on both scales.

Table 4.5.2
Differences on Teaching and Attainment Items (High Expectations and Students Progress) in All Schools by Location.

	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
Item No	High Expectations Items	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p
3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	4.41	4.36	0.86	0.39	3.76	3.54	3.22	<.01
9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	4.61	4.57	0.98	0.33	4.01	3.77	3.71	<.01
15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	4.09	4.08	0.14	0.89	3.53	3.46	1.20	0.23
21+	Students are challenged to their capacity.	4.45	4.34	2.08	0.04	3.52	3.29	3.09	<.01
27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	4.34	4.18	2.22	0.03	3.79	3.45	4.20	<.01
32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasis success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	4.46	4.43	0.65	0.52	3.89	3.60	4.46	<.01
	Student Progress Items								
6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	4.57	4.67	2.45	0.01	4.09	3.87	4.19	<.01
12+	Teachers use different methods (including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	4.39	4.30	1.83	0.07	4.00	3.74	5.04	<.01
18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	4.25	4.22	0.72	0.47	3.71	3.48	4.10	<.01
24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	2.35	4.28	1.40	0.16	3.84	3.62	4.14	<.01
30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	4.38	4.36	0.29	0.77	3.89	3.75	2.43	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.39	4.32	1.98	0.05	3.82	3.60	5.47	<.01

Investigations into the difference between the preferred and actual response for each statement, using the unpaired *t* test, reinforced the interpretations reached above. The lower the score (when 'does apply' response was subtracted from the 'should apply' score) the closer the school was operating as parents would wish it with regard to statements used in this study. The 'does apply' response for urban parents' responses was significantly closer to the preferred response for 70% of the statements. For the remaining statements there was no significant difference.

Table 4.5.3
Differences on Safe and Orderly Environment Items in All Schools by Location

Item No	Statement	Preferred				Actual			
	Safe and Orderly Environment Items	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p	Urban $\bar{x}$	Rural $\bar{x}$	t	p
4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	4.57	4.61	-.70	0.48	4.08	3.93	2.42	0.02
10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	4.54	4.52	0.46	0.64	4.20	3.94	4.23	<.01
16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	4.34	4.31	0.51	0.61	3.65	3.32	4.29	<.01
22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	4.60	4.51	2.09	0.04	4.16	3.97	2.99	<.01
28-	This is an unruly school.	4.54	4.42	1.85	0.06	4.32	3.95	5.31	<.01
35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	4.27	4.11	2.13	0.03	3.97	3.62	3.91	<.01
	$\bar{x}$	4.47	4.41	1.88	0.06	4.05	3.79	5.09	<.01

The overall patterns reviewed in this section, with regard to location as the independent variable, indicated that where there were significant differences in preferences, urban parents had stronger opinions of what should happen in schools. The differences between urban and rural parents' perceptions of the actual situation, however, was the most marked of any variable investigated. Except for two of the 33 statements, urban parents' perceptions of the actual situation were significantly more favourable than were rural parents' perceptions. The number and nature of descriptive comments about comparatively inexperienced and transient teachers working in rural (isolated) areas seemed to provide the best account for the marked differences highlighted in this section. Rural parents appear to be deeply concerned about the standard of teaching in rural schools.

4.6 Socio- Economic Background

The analyses of parents' perception compared to socioeconomic economic background are reported in this section. The Educational Needs Index (ENI) provided by the DEA was taken to be an accurate indicator of the socioeconomic background of the district each school serves. The higher the ENI the lower the socioeconomic background and vice versa. Schools were divided into high socioeconomic background and low socioeconomic background. As only minor variation was found using socioeconomic background as the independent variable, the tables of results are not shown.

Preferences showed significant variation on only four of the 33 statements. Higher socioeconomic parents had stronger preferences for varied communication between teachers and parent (2+), teaching issues to be bought to the attention of parents (11+), the school to be safe and secure (33-) and learning not be disrupted (35-).

With regard to perceptions of the actual situation parents of higher socioeconomic schools responded significantly higher to statements concerned with use of volunteers (26+), behaviour (16+), security (33-) and disruptions (35-). Lower socioeconomic parent responses were higher for statements concerning a system for marking and checking work regularly (18+ and 30+).

In summary, it appeared that where there were differences in preferences, parents of higher socioeconomic schools, had significantly stronger opinions for what should happen in schools while lower socioeconomic parents focussed more on supervision and support.

Perception of the actual situation varied with no clear pattern emerging. Higher socioeconomic parents had significantly stronger opinions to items concerning Safe and Orderly Environment but lower socioeconomic parents had significantly stronger opinions about the actual situation with regard to content category Student Progress.

4.6 Summary

The results in this chapter illustrated that the survey instrument gave fresh insights into parents' preferences and perceptions. They varied from school to school. The results also indicated that parents' perceptions of school effectiveness varied by type, size and location of schools, and to a lesser degree, according to socioeconomic context.

Parents of all categories of schools supported the 33 items in the preferred scale. Average support was in excess of 85%. Tasmanian parents, therefore, consider the items (and the hence the content categories) as appropriate. The variety of descriptive comments, however, confirmed, as the literature suggested that this was not an exhaustive set of items or content categories.

Support was indicated for the use of volunteers in high schools and mastery of subject matter at each grade level in primary schools preferred responses. Support for these statements (15+ and 26+) was, however, significantly lower than all other statements. While these items were supported they could also be classed as contentious in comparison to the other items.

Leesville parents' responses showed some significant variation in preferences depending on the grade in which their children were studying although the greatest variation was clearly between the two schools, Leesville Primary and Leesville High. Knowledge of goals, aims and objectives became more important as their children progressed through school. Similarly, understanding assessment procedures and teaching methodologies became more important in higher grades. Parents of grade nine and ten students had a significantly higher preference for methods of instruction and for assessment to be explained than any other group. Studying TCE subjects for the first time in grade nine may explain this result.

Primary school and district high school parents had significantly stronger preferences with regard to Safe and Orderly Environment items although these issues were supported by all parents. A possible explanation may be that parents had a preference for their children to become more independent with age, inferring in turn that schools should not have the same behaviour rules for all children. Parents had a significantly weaker preference for

work to be marked regularly in higher grades. This preference tends to support the idea that parents prefer their children to become more independent learners with age.

Parental support of the actual situation varied markedly with type and location of schools, and to a lesser extent to the size and socioeconomic background of the school. Primary school parents supported 24 of the 32 items, high school parents supported eight of the 32 items while district high parents supported six of the 32 items. Overall primary parents supported the actual situation, with average support for all items being 76%. High school and district parents were ambivalent with regard to the actual situation they saw in their school, with 60% and 59% support respectively.

Analysis of descriptive comments confirmed these results with the ratio of positive to negative comments being 1.4:1 for primary schools, 0.92:1 for high schools and 0.71:1 for district high schools. In excess of 80% of descriptive comments concerned the relationship between children and three groups; teachers, senior staff and the principal. When added to the implications of factor analysis this confirms that parents are concerned above all else with the quality of relationships relating to their children's' education. Comments about governance/advocacy, and in particular, school councils, were less than 2% of the optional comments made.

The changed nature of school organisation from primary school to high school may help explain this marked change in perception. Primary school parents could identify with one

teacher as the teacher of 'their' child but high school parents may have in excess of eight teachers teaching their child making communication between parent and teacher more difficult. Other possible explanations for the difference in perception between district high and primary parents include the limited experience and comparatively transient nature of district high teachers.

In excess of 90% of all parents surveyed indicated that principals and senior staff were available to discuss teaching but all parent groups did not support teaching and learning issues were being bought to their attention. This suggests that when parents instigate discussions, principals' and/or senior staff readily make themselves available but they do not provide forums for parents to discuss teaching and learning issues. Similarly the data indicated that schools, in general, do not encourage feedback from parents about the quality of the program. Parents also did not consider that students, in general, were being challenged to their capacity or that subject matter was mastered at each grade level. Combined, these results suggest that all principals and/or senior staff should provide avenues for informing parents about teaching and learning issues and to invite them to evaluate the school program.

Urban parents viewed the actual situation significantly more positively than rural parents on 31 of the 33 statements. The descriptive comments pointed to a possible explanation (Appendix Q, Appendix R and Appendix S). Rural parents specifically mentioned the

number of inexperienced and transient staff who worked in rural, and in particular, isolated schools as an equity issue that needs to be addressed by the DEA.

Parents of smaller primary and district high schools had stronger preferences for what should happen in schools than did parents in larger schools. The opposite was found for high school parents. In general, no matter what the type of school, parents of children in larger schools had more positive opinions of what actually happened than did parents of children in smaller schools. In general, smaller schools in Tasmania are also rural schools. Hence, these results support the pattern found between urban-rural schools.

In chapter five, the implications of these findings will be discussed in relation to the relevant ideas found in the research literature and to current policies, prior to recommendations being developed to do with practice, policies and further research.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS and DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The research reported in this thesis aimed initially to 'set up machinery' to pick up 'weak signals' coming from parents. A second but related aim was to investigate the usefulness of such an instrument as a linking mechanism between parents and school leaders and policy makers, to facilitate shared understanding by allowing parents to 'have a say' in an anonymous way.

Relationships between school leaders, policy makers and parents were considered important components of self managing schools along with the related issues of devolution of authority and school governance. These issues were being addressed in education, both nationally and internationally but importantly for this study, in Tasmania. In Tasmania, the formation of school councils, was made mandatory by the Labor Government in 1990. The Liberal Government which came to power in 1991 subsequently strongly encouraged school councils while not making them mandatory. One of the purposes of school councils was to form a close working relationship between school professionals and the wider school community of which parents are a significant group. The third aim, then, was to determine the appropriateness of the data for use as an

aid to school policy makers in forming and reviewing policies. As stated in Chapter One, as few as three to five per cent of parents were involved in school governance and/or advocacy.

These aims prompted two research questions:

1. What are the perceptions that Tasmanian parents have of the effectiveness of public schools in Tasmania?
2. What are the differences in perception between various groups within the Tasmanian parent community?

The research questions were investigated by surveying a stratified random sample of primary, high and district high school parents. It was anticipated that parents might have varying perceptions and preferences related to different school types. Parents of students in secondary colleges, distance education and special schools were not surveyed . The vast majority of public school students attended primary, high or district high schools during their compulsory years of schooling.

Chapter Two is a report of a review of school effectiveness literature. Criticisms of school effectiveness research were also reviewed. Literature concerning devolution, restructuring and the self managing school was also examined. A case was made that public schools in Tasmania were all using some form of school self management which

was based on ideas drawn from school effectiveness literature. It was also noted that self managing schools may be facing a 'legitimacy crisis' from the client's perspective since their views were not represented in the current accountability processes in Tasmania.

Chapter Three explained the iterative processes used to develop the survey questionnaire. How political support was obtained is also explained. It was considered an essential precondition for the research. The main technical components of the questionnaire were content categories, statements, instructions and scales. The components were developed concurrently by reference to the literature and ongoing discussions with an external advisory panel of experts, principals and teachers, school councillors and parents. Various statistical analyses were conducted to determine the technical merit of items and the instrument. After the instrument had demonstrably satisfactory levels of reliability and validity a random stratified sample of parents of Tasmanian public schools was surveyed. The stratification was based on school type, size, location and the socioeconomic status of the community each school served.

The results were reported in Chapter Four. All parent groups supported all items on the preference scale. The results indicated that there were differences in perception with regard to all variables investigated. Analysis of Leesville High and Primary School parents' responses indicated some within school variation but the main variation was found to be between schools. This conclusion was confirmed by the statewide survey. Primary school parents generally supported the actual situation, while high and district

high school parents were generally ambivalent about the situation they saw in their schools. Urban parents had a significantly higher opinion of the actual situation than did rural parents. Parents of larger schools had a significantly higher opinion of the actual situation than did parents of smaller schools. Parents' perception of the actual situation using socioeconomic background of the schools' community as the independent variable showed little significant variation.

5.2 Comparing Findings and Implications to the Literature

This research has demonstrated that it is possible to develop the data collection methods needed to obtain formal feedback from parents, a significant client group in the school community. Key ideas encountered in the literature have been confirmed. Parents want to 'have their say' in Tasmania and may do so provided school leaders facilitate the process. As few as two to five percent of the parent population are involved, or want to be involved, in school governance, and those who are involved are usually not representative of the total parent population Epstein (1989) and Fullan (1991).

Recalling from section 1.3, parents who have lower socioeconomic status or who are lone parents, transient, work unpredictable hours or are members of ethnic minorities tend to not want to be involved in formal school governance procedures. This research has demonstrated a way of overcoming this equity issue by allowing parents to express their views without having to be involved in formal procedures. It was inferred from the

literature that the changing nature of the modern community, in which the nature of work and family are in a state of flux, that the nature of school professional - parent interactions will have to change. Flexible approaches will be required. It can be concluded from the optional comments examined above that parents who can't attend school will find flexible alternatives useful. In essence they will be able to have their say at a time that is convenient to them and in ways they find congenial

Response rates varied from 40% to 90% according to the school with an average in excess of 60%. Parent participation rates internationally have been found to average about 20% (Epstein 1989 and Fullan 1991) for all school activities. It has been demonstrated that this can be increased by a least 20% and as much as 70% by consulting and surveying parents. This type of involvement would best be categorised as Communication from the School to the Parents, as described in table 1.1, although the category would better modified to Communication to and from the School..

A common language between parents and professionals may develop as a result of this type of two-way communication. McGaw *et al.*(1993) came to the same conclusion. This type of communication may help break down the barrier between parents and professionals that often exists, as examined in section 1.1. Lay people find the specialised language that professionals use difficult, threatening and annoying (Lindle and Boyd 1989). This would enhance symbiotic relationships and collaborative norms between school professionals and parents.

The *Parent Participation Policy* (DEA 1994, p. 2) outlined various rights and responsibilities of parents, one of which was the right to comment on education by raising concerns and expectations about their children's education with the DEA and governments. Another right was for parents to be informed by regular written and verbal reporting on their children's progress. The *Reporting to Parents Policy* (DEA 1994) explained the rationale, goals and requirements of reporting to parents. There was no mention, however, about reporting from parents but the literature, cited in Chapter One, suggested that it was up to school leaders to provide such mechanisms. The literature review highlighted, and this research confirmed, that there is a pressing need for accountability procedures from the client's perspective. A possible implication is to incorporate reporting from parents in the existing policy changing it from *The Reporting to Parents Policy* to *The Reporting to and from Parents Policy.*

A key principle of the *Parent Participation Policy* (DEA 1994, p. 3) is that ' parents have a range of commitments and pressures; arrangements for their sharing in the education of their children should be flexible' . This implies that a variety of approaches to communication are required, particularly in high schools and district high schools. School meetings are often poorly attended, for reasons explained in Chapter One, yet the research reported above confirmed that parents want to be informed about teaching methodology, students' achievements and general school policies, consistent with the TEC's findings. The immediate past, in Tasmanian education, has been one of considerable industrial

unrest resulting in working hours of teachers, duties and tasks being more clearly defined. This research, however, suggests a similar conclusion to Dimmock (1995) and Townsend (1994), that is, flexible working arrangements will be required to take into account the changing nature of schooling and society. This flexibility is required to implement communication strategies, for example kitchen conferencing and networking, which are more likely to improve parent participation (Williamson *et al.* 1995).

Tasmanian parents surveyed supported what the literature had suggested were important components of school effectiveness. All items in the preferred scale were supported. It can be concluded from the optional comments, however, that the items (and hence the content categories) used were not all of the effectiveness variables that parents consider important. This coheres with criticism of school effectiveness literature above, that is, there is no one set of effectiveness variables by which to determine school effectiveness. While each school may be different, the items used in this research could be used as a starting point from which school leaders could form their own school-specific accountability procedures. The iterative methodology, used for this research, outlined in chapter 3 could be used as a guide.

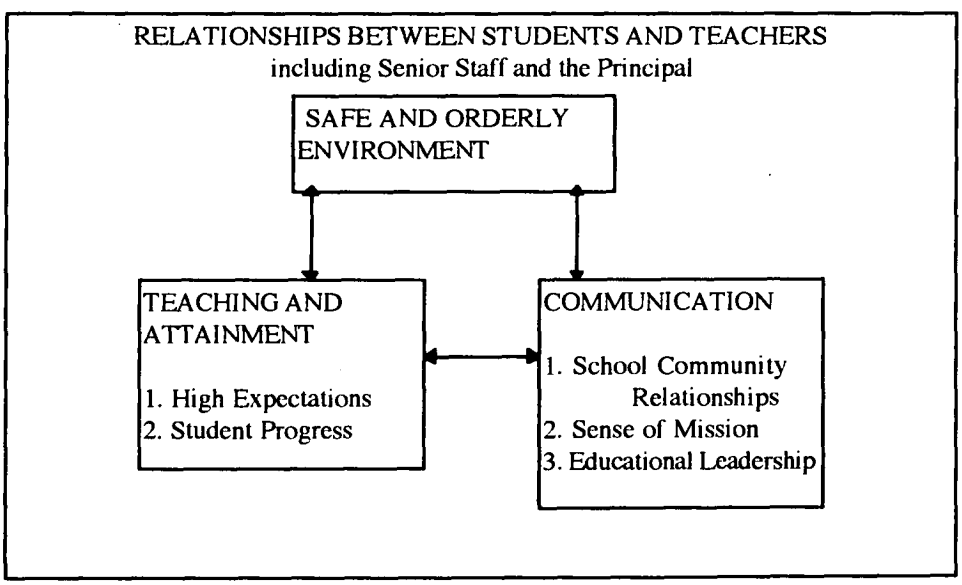
Analysis of optional comments leads to similar conclusions to those offered by McGaw *et al.* (1993) and Townsend (1994), as mentioned in 2.8.6. The relationship between students and teachers, including senior staff and the principal, is the main criterion that parents use to judge the effectiveness of schools. As noted above, principal components

factor analysis of the quantitative data also suggested that there was one dominant factor. It had an eigen value of 9.1 compared to 3.2, 2.7 and 1.7 for factors two, three and four respectively. This is consistent with the literature, summarised in 1.1, about how perceptions of organisations are formed. 31 of the 33 statements load above .5 on this factor (see Table 3.19). This is an example of the 'halo effect' mentioned in section 1.1, that is 'a tendency to form global impressions based on overall judgements of 'goodness or badness'. It can be concluded that the 'goodness or badness' of schools as perceived by parents is based on their view of interpersonal relationships between teachers (including senior staff and principals) and students.

This research has implications for the development of a school effectiveness conceptual framework which was acknowledged in the literature review as an impediment to further development in the field. Table 5.1 below, illustrates a possible conceptual framework relating the variables used in this research. The outer rectangle represents relationships between students and teachers, including senior staff and the principal as perceived by parents. The factors Teaching and Attainment, Communication and Safe and Orderly Environment are related to one another and are embedded within this global factor. The Teaching and Attainment Factor combines the content categories of High Expectations and Student Progress. The Communication Factor combines the content categories Sense of Mission, School Community Relationships and Educational Leadership. The Safe and Orderly Environment Factor remained the same as the content category.

This research substantiates Duignan's conceptual framework for school effectiveness, Table 2.5. Comparing his framework to the framework based on parents' perceptions, Table 5.1 below, it appears that there is overlap or 'touchstone'. Duignan's Teacher Behaviour is similar to Teaching and Attainment. School Culture and Climate is similar to Safe and Orderly Environment and Sense of Mission from the Communication category. There is similarity between Duignan's Leadership and Decision Making and Educational Leadership from the Communication Cluster

Table 5.1
Conceptual Framework based on Parents' Perceptions of School Effectiveness

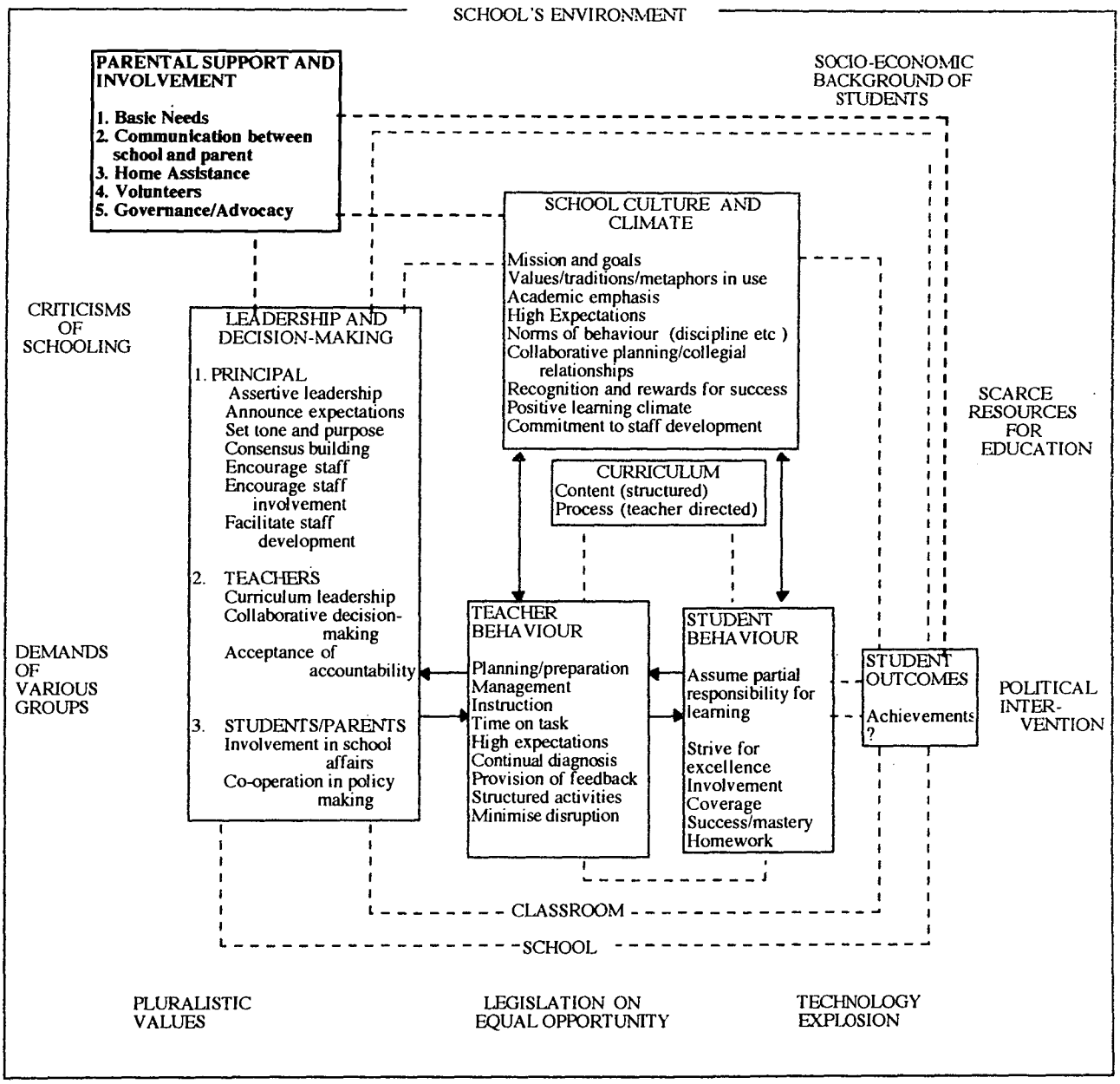


In Duignan's Schools' Environment factors, see Table 2.5, Parental Support and Involvement are listed but there was no indication of any hypothesised or actual causal link from it to any other content category within the framework. It cannot be concluded

directly from this research that there are any. However, the overlaps described above and the literature in Chapter One suggest that some possible linkages can be hypothesised.

Duignan's framework has been modified as illustrated in Table 5.2 below, to take the implications of this research into account. Fullan concluded, as stated in Chapter One, that 'the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement'. This suggests the category Parental Support and Involvement can be expanded to include basic needs, communication between school and parent, home assistance, volunteers and governance/advocacy, as explained in section 1.2. Recalling from Chapter Two that effective schools were more tightly linked structurally, symbolically and culturally than non effective schools implies that staff, parents and students share a greater sense of direction in more effective schools. This suggests additional possible linkages, indicated by dashed lines, in Duignan's diagram. One possible linkage is from parental support and involvement to leadership and decision making. Another possible linkage is suggested from parental support and involvement to school culture and climate. The overlaps between Duignan's content categories and content categories derived from this research and conclusions from the literature support the addition of these linkages.

Table 5.2
Revised Conceptual Framework of School Effectiveness after Duignan, 1986
(Amendments in bold)



The summary of school effectiveness literature, see section 2.5, listed four core principles that comprised the infrastructure of the field. First is the belief by teachers that all students can learn. Secondly there should be an equitable distribution of important

outcomes of schooling. Thirdly the school community should take a fair share of the responsibility for what happens to youth in its care. Fourthly schools are tightly linked structurally, symbolically and culturally, that is, staff, parents and students share a sense of direction. The 'goodness or badness' of the relationships formed between students and teachers will be influenced by the beliefs and values teachers hold concerning these issues. It follows that the position teachers hold with regard to the core principles of school effectiveness will influence the relationship formed between them and their students and this is a major determinant of parents' perception of school effectiveness.

While disproving the negative does not prove the positive, it is unlikely positive relationships ensuring student progress will form between teachers and students if the teachers have formed the opinion that the students cannot learn. Alternative methods of teaching will most likely not be tried if the teacher has a preconceived idea that a student or class of students can't learn.

It is also unlikely that positive relationships will form if teachers don't believe there should be an equitable distribution of important outcomes of schooling. This belief is directly related to many equity issues related to gender, rurality, ethnicity, socioeconomic status etc. that are current issues in Tasmanian education.

Finally, it is unlikely that a positive supportive school environment will evolve and hence that positive relationships will form if teachers don't believe that they should take a fair share of the responsibility for what happens to the youth in their care.

Further it is unlikely that positive relationships will form if there isn't a common sense of direction among stakeholders. If teachers don't have the same sense of direction as students and parents, positive relationships will be difficult and conflict between stakeholders will result.

The importance of these beliefs and values suggests that the School Management Cycle of Caldwell and Spinks (1992) for Tasmanian schools requires further development. Just as the charter and its implications were added to their Refined Model, see Table 2.15, teacher examination of their fundamental beliefs also needs to be part of the planning cycle. This may be implied in the development of the charter but needs to be made more explicit. It follows that management plans developed by teachers regarding teaching and learning will be based on the beliefs and values with regard to the core principles of school effectiveness. It also means that the examination of beliefs about teaching needs to be related to learning and leadership through formative evaluation and that rigorous accountability needs to link evaluation to planning.

The significantly different view of the actual situation taken by high school parents, as compared to primary school parents, was expected. The difference in organisational

arrangements, and the relative homogeneity of teachers' views of what different types of schools should be and do (Grady 1993, p. 134) suggest reasons for this difference. Students in Tasmanian primary schools tend to identify with one teacher although other teachers may take them from time to time. Secondary students in Tasmanian schools have less opportunity to identify since they may have in excess of nine teachers. This is not to argue that this will always be the case, or should be the case, but to indicate that organisational structures reflect particular assumptions and yield different outcomes in relationships.

District high parents' perception of the actual situation being significantly lower than primary school parents' perceptions, on 27 of the items and lower than high school parents' perception of the actual situation on 10 of the items was unexpected. District high schools are usually organised in ways similar to primary schools from kindergarten to grade six, and like high schools from grade seven onwards. There was some indication from the optional comments that district high parents had a more favourable view of the organisation of primary grades than secondary grades but more research is required.

Parents of primary schools students also tend to identify with the teacher of their child. In junior primary schools parents often come into classrooms to deliver or collect their children and many informal discussions take place. This informal contact decreases as the child becomes older and more independent. This research supports the findings of Gable *et. al.* who also found that parents who visit the school the most have the most favourable

opinion of the school. It follows that high school teachers should encourage visits by parents, both formal and informal, as a way of improving parents' perception of school effectiveness.

Although it is acknowledged that communication between parents and children was not directly researched, a corollary to the above is that the relationship between parents and children may also influence parents' perceptions of school. As children become increasingly independent communication between parents and their children tend to be less intimate. The onset of adolescence, which coincides with late primary school or early high school, adds complexity to communications between parents and their children. The implication supported by this research is that school leaders need to find ways to communicate directly with parents rather than expect children to be reliable conveyors of information. Informal meetings, notes, phone calls and personal visits are favoured by parents.

There was a major communication problem found between high and district school professionals and parents that needs addressing. The DEA has recognised this problem and is encouraging schools to investigate alternative means of organisation during the middle years of schooling, years five to eight. It can be concluded from this research that primary school organisation leads to a more positive perception of school effectiveness than does high school organisation. This should be evaluated along with technical and professional accountability data to look for new policy touchstone. A clear implication of

this research, however, is that alternative organisational structures should at least be examined in junior high schools.

Parents from all school types did not support the proposition that schools encouraged feedback from parents about the quality of programs. They also indicated that matters of teaching and learning were not being discussed with parents. This adds confirmation to the possibility of a legitimacy crisis suggested by Macpherson and Caldwell, suggesting in turn, that it would be caused by an accountability vacuum in self managing schools.

Results from this research should be considered in conjunction with the professional and technical forms of accountability that are already in use in Tasmania. School leaders should look for 'touchstone' between all forms of accountability rather than using the research process suggested above alone. The Australian models of school effectiveness, see section 2.4, suggests an interactive approach. Care needs to be taken that the data are not used to reduce schools to a 'decontextualised' and 'impersonal world' of a few effectiveness variables that are manipulated by 'strong leaders' and 'teacher technicians', as suggested by Angus (1994) in section 2.4.

The findings of the research reported above also suggest that the public information campaign to inform parents of the *K-12 Frameworks, Our Children :The Future, Secondary Education and the Future*, National Subject Statements and Key Intended Learning Outcomes should be continued. These documents are the current official basis of

teaching and reporting in Tasmanian schools. Syllabuses are currently being reviewed for high school students to take the K-12 Frameworks and National Statements into account. The research suggests the parent information campaign will require a variety of approaches.

The differences between high school and primary school parents' perceptions were predicted but district high school parents' perceptions were unexpected. It was not possible to distinguish between parents of kindergarten to grade six students' responses and parents of grade seven to ten students responses within the district high school data. There is a need for further research in this area. It was also predicted from the organisational arrangements of district high schools that parents' perceptions of the actual situation would be more favourable than high school parents' perceptions and less favourable than primary school parents' perceptions.

The relationship between urban parents' responses, rural parents' responses and inter-school comparisons suggested that, in general, rural parents consider schools less effective than do urban parents. The relationship between size of school and parents' perceptions added weight to this conclusion. The larger schools surveyed were, in the main, in urban areas with the smaller schools in rural and isolated areas. All district high school were classed as rural schools.

Many of the negative descriptive comments by rural, and in particular by district high school parents, referred to inexperienced and comparatively transient teachers who had classroom management problems. It can also be inferred that transient teachers, including transient principals, cause negative parent perceptions. It is not unusual for teachers in Tasmania, when promoted or assigned to a remote area, to leave their families in the more favoured urban areas and to travel to remote schools for all or part of the school week. These arrangements were specifically mentioned in the optional comments by rural parents who regard them as offensive. The nature of the comments suggests that such offence taking derives from social distance, the devaluing of local community and the unwillingness to enter into reciprocal relationships.

Teachers of grades seven to ten in smaller district high schools may have relatively less pupil contact than high school teachers but are often responsible for teaching and moderating two, three and sometimes four or more subjects. This requires them to be aware of the intricacies of the moderation process and attending moderation meetings to explain and justify their awards. In preferred locations subject moderators tend to be experienced staff and senior staff. District high secondary teachers also have to cope with day-do-day teaching often in schools with inexperienced senior staff to support them. Historically they stay for two to five years then move to a preferred school. The research reported in this thesis confirmed that this 'normal' career path is seen in negative terms by rural parents.

Dinham (1995), see section 2.4, identified unwanted transfers to small schools and towns and the associated shock of unfamiliar socioeconomic and cultural environment was a common source of teacher dissatisfaction. It is not clear whether or not the current transfer policy will improve the perception that parents have of the situation in rural schools. It is unlikely that the new policy will make teachers less transient but more likely compound the negative perceptions. A different solution to staffing isolated schools will be required and the need is urgent. Allowing school communities to be actively engaged in selecting and supporting staff is one possibility.

5.3 Future Research

This research, while producing valid and reliable data, also gave pointers as to how the survey instrument could be improved if it was to be used for further research. It was the first time this type of research had been attempted in Tasmania and the instrument should not be considered an end product. In Chapman's (1994) terms it was a good vessel to undertake the first journey across the sea of parents' perceptions of school effectiveness and toward more general accountability from the client's perspective.

Table 5.3, below, gives some suggested changes to the statements, which are followed by comments about instructions, scales and some overall conclusions about the methodology. If content categories remain the same then the questionnaire could be reduced to about

sixteen statements. It would then be appropriate to add further categories and statements based on the descriptive comments in Tables 4.2.10 and 4.3.10.

The descriptive comments supplemented and enriched the data from the Likert scales. The word 'optional' may be removed from the final page to improve the response rates to the questions. The number of descriptive comments increased markedly from trial one to trial two when the size and complexity of the questionnaire was reduced.

The instructions were clear about what had to be done while items expressed in the negative form caused some interpretation problems when respondents were giving preferences. Other means of detecting responder bias needs to be investigated. It is questionable if negative statements are necessary at all, particularly if responses are anonymous. Since the questionnaires are not filled out under controlled conditions they need to be as user friendly as possible.

Table 5.3
Suggested Changes to the Items.

Content Category	Item No	Statements	Comments and suggested Modifications
		Communication Items	
Sense Of Mission	1+	The general goals of the school are clear.	1+, 19+, and 25+ replaced with one statement. There were many comments which specifically mentioned these as repetitive.
	13+	Decisions made in this school reflect the general goals of the school	
	19+	The aims of the school are widely understood.	
	25+	The school has a set of clearly stated objectives.	Overall reduce to two or possibly three statements.
	31+	Parents, students and community members understand the key purposes of schooling	
School Community Relationships	2+	Teachers in this school use either phone calls, regular notes or parent conferences in addition to report cards to communicate children's progress.	8+ Many comments noted that there was an active group but that few parents were actually involved.
	8+	There is an active parent-school group in which many parents are involved	
	14+	There are many informal contacts between teachers and parents	These statements were respondent friendly.
	20+	The school program encourages feedback from parents about the quality of the program.	
	26+	The school uses parents or community volunteers to assist learning.	
Educational Leadership	5+	The principal and senior staff lead frequent discussions about instruction and achievement with teachers, parents and students.	Comments reflected that parents didn't feel they could give an accurate answer to 5+, 11+, 17+ and 29+. This was difficult to pick up from the quantitative data.
	11+	The principal and senior staff regularly bring teaching issues (such as curriculum topics, improving teaching, etc) to parents for discussion	
	17+	The principal and senior staff explain teaching methods to parents.	34+ considered quite different from other statements in group.
	29+	The principal and senior staff communicate openly and frankly about teaching and learning with staff, students and parents.	
	34+	The principal and senior staff are available to discuss matters concerning teaching	Consider reducing to two statements combining 5+, 11+, 17+ and 29+

		Teaching and Attainment	
High Expectations	3+	Most teachers in this school hold students to high standards of performance in their work.	Consider rewording statements to be more specific. eg. 21+ change to: My child is challenged to capacity. 15+ was considered differently to other statements.
	9+	Teachers try consistently to help students.	
	15+	Students are expected to master subject matter at each grade level.	
	21+	Students are challenged to capacity.	
	27-	Students who accomplish the most are the only ones praised.	
	32+	All students are treated in ways which emphasise success and potential rather than failures and shortcomings.	
Student Progress	6+	Teachers monitor achievement to keep track of students.	Statements considered clear giving good information. Consider combining 18+ and 24+. Consider combining 6+ and 12+
	12+	Teachers use different methods (Including samples of students' work and tests) to assess learning.	
	18+	There is a system for assessing learning on a regular basis.	
	24+	Students achievement is systematically monitored and assessed.	
	30+	Students are aware that their work will be regularly checked.	
Safe and Orderly Environment	4+	Staff and students view this school as a safe and secure place.	Two possible sub-factors. Knowledge of codes of behaviour and enactment of codes of behaviour. Consider combining 10+ and 22+. Consider combining 4+, 28-, 33- and 35-.
	10+	There are well known codes of conduct for this school.	
	16+	Generally, discipline is not a problem at this school.	
	22+	The school has a clearly stated set of behaviour rules.	
	28-	This is an unruly school.	
	33-	There is no sense of security and order at this school.	
	35-	Learning at this school is often disrupted.	

It can be concluded that all statements were considered important preferences by the vast majority of parents (> 90%). An improvement may be to change the scale for preferences to Importance to This School (Stoll and Fink 1991). The scale would then be 1= Not Important, 2 = Not very Important, 3 = Fairly Important, 4 = Important and 5 = Crucial. Keeping the instructions as simple as possible, hence having the same heading for both scales needs further investigation. It can be concluded from this research that good response rates, sixty per cent or more, can be achieved when Tasmanian parents are surveyed provided they are assured that the information will be used by school leaders and policy makers. Parents are prepared to use this form of communication to 'have their say'. It is unlikely that two different scales like Importance to This School and Applies to this School would cause the response rate to become unacceptable. It is also likely that there would be a better spread of responses on the preference (should apply) scale.

5.4 Reflections

Schools involved in this research have used the experience as a starting point for initiating school improvement policies and implementation plans. Leesville Primary School published a summary of the results of the survey in their parent newsletter and made available all data to parents on request. Survey information was used as an aid for reviewing, evaluating and forming school policies.

As a result of the survey Leesville High school councillors examined the School Charter and rewrote their Mission Statement. This took in excess of twelve months to develop and involved discussions and workshops with teachers, parents and councillors. The researcher acted as the facilitator.

The methodology used was considered important with both Leesville High and Primary School Councillors apparently taking 'ownership' of the research. Although taking considerable time it was an example of Mulford's (1994) concept of interactive professionalism. Clarification of roles and the development of a common language between stakeholders were important benefits of the approach. This instrument, then, can be used as a generic starting point with each school community modifying it to suit their specific purposes.

Feedback from principals, about the statewide survey, indicated that higher response rates were achieved where school leaders made it known that the information would be used and considered. Some schools requested the descriptive comments, which were rendered untraceable, and concluded that this helped with interpretation and application of the data. In can also be concluded that the greater the number of parents surveyed the more creditable the results will be considered, no matter what the technical merit of the data. As a result of this survey one school evaluated and modified their supportive school environment policy. It was beyond the scope of this research to investigate how the data

was used but indications are that other school leaders found the experience of being involved useful.

The research reported here breaks new ground in several areas of knowledge. It is one of a few studies which has attempted to assess the perceptions that parents have of schools, and specifically about parents' perceptions of the effectiveness of Tasmanian public schools.

The iterative and inclusive methodology that accepted different types of data was a key aspect of the study's success. It was important to acknowledge that educational research was partly a political exercise. Involving relevant stakeholders in the design and development added another dimension to the project, while causing logistical and ethical concerns for the researcher.

The study has illustrated empirically the nature of parents' perceptions and preferences concerning the effectiveness of public schools in Tasmania. It has identified differences between various parent groups. The study does not provide information that demonstrates a link between parents' perceptions and student outcomes although this is inferred by the literature.

The study has added to the body of knowledge about the relationships between professionals and parents. A method has been demonstrated whereby school leaders can

take into account parents' views of schools both at the systems level and school level. This research provides a part solution to the accountability vacuum from the clients perspective. It confirms that attention to this issue remains a pressing need and that the hypothesised vacuum exists between policy and practice.

New ground has been broken, too, as a result of this study's demonstration that an easily administered and analysed questionnaire can be used to good effect to gain insights into parents' perceptions of schools in Tasmania. This information would be useful at both the systems level and school level as an aid to policy formulation and implementation.

5.5 Recommendations

1. That school leaders plan to enable teachers to examine the implications of the four core principles of school effectiveness.
2. School leaders evaluate information from parents and other clients, along with technical and professional accountability data, to look for new local policy touchstone.
3. Flexible industrial arrangements for school professionals be negotiated to take into account the changing nature of work and family
4. School leaders, and in particular high school leaders, keep parents informed of curriculum changes. Recommendation 3 is a necessary precondition as a variety of methods will be required.

5. The DEA examine alternative ways of staffing rural and/or isolated schools. It is predicted from the literature and this research that the current transfer policy will make little improvement to parents' perceptions of school effectiveness.
6. The DEA develop and implement a *Reporting from Parents Policy* to compliment the *Reporting to Parents Policy* and to support key principle 5 in the *Parent Participation Policy.*
7. School leaders encourage formal and informal visits by parents.
8. Further research focus on the following issues;

- parents' perceptions of school effectiveness and student outcomes,
- parents' perceptions of school effectiveness and school organisational arrangements, and
- accountability procedures from the clients' perspective.

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